

Islam: A Comprehensive Introduction

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An English Rendering of *Mīzān* by
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Translator's Note

*Islam: A Comprehensive Introduction*¹ is an extensive study of the contents of Islam by Javed Ahmād Ghāmidī (b. 1951). It is an effort which spans almost two decades of both creative and critical thinking. This attempt to expound the contents of Islam is not a new one. Preceding Ghāmidī is an illustrious series of names who have ventured forth to present Islam the way they have understood it. All these efforts are commendable and merit deep deliberation. A serious student should perhaps conduct a comparative study to gauge the approaches followed by each.

The author is a prominent pupil of Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī (1904-1997), a profound exegete and a distinguished student of the prodigious Qur'ānic scholar: Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāḥī (1863-1930). Ghāmidī draws heavily on the approach and research of his two eminent predecessors. However, he has not only developed and lent precision to their approach and views, he has also made some original contributions in this regard.

The entire effort is a fresh interpretation of Islam from its original sources on the basis of the principles delineated in the first preamble. The reason that it has been undertaken is that interpretation of sacred texts has always remained a human endeavour and thus can never remain fault free. It is as a result of this principle that the author has continued to evaluate and re-evaluate even his own findings. He is of the opinion that no view or interpretation is acceptable if it cannot stand up to criticism. It should not have any value merely because a certain great scholar or authority presented it. Even the greatest of scholars are not immune from error; therefore, it is arguments and reasoning based only on the original sources of Islam that should be the basis for accepting or rejecting a point of view. Thus, just as the author has differed with authorities of the past, he has also differed from his two predecessors whose approach and research are foundational to this work.

Some distinctive features of the author's approach evident from this book are summarized below:

1. The Qur'ān is regarded as the *mīzān* (the scale) and the *furqān* (distinguisher between right and wrong), a status which it itself claims. It is the scale in which everything related to religion must be weighed and the decisive word in every matter of religion. Everything in religion must stand in subservience to its verdicts. It is as a result of this supreme status of the Qur'ān that the author has made the following inferences:

1. The original Urdu title of this translation is *Mizān* (lit. the scale). The current translation is from the 5th edition of *Mizān* published in February 2010. (Translator)

i. There is only one reading of the Qur'ān called the *al-qirā'at al-āmmah* (the general reading). It is only this reading which has been transmitted through *tawātur* and can thus be called the Qur'ān. All other readings cannot be regarded as the Qur'ān and none of them stands up to the criteria of *tawātur*.

ii. The *muhkam* and *mutashābih* verses of the Qur'ān are distinct and easily discernable. The latter are verses that mention things which are beyond the grasp of human knowledge and observation or belong to matters of the Hereafter. Such things are mentioned in the form of comparison (*tashbīh*) to things which we are aware of in our own language and through our own experience. The denotation of these verses is clear. However, human intellect is unable to understand the reality to which they refer.

iii. The Qur'ān is a univocal book that conveys its meanings with absolute clarity and there is no ambiguity about them. The intentionality of its text is certain and unmistakable. Its words convey what they stand for with full certainty. Differences in its interpretation have arisen not because there is any defect in its language or style. They have arisen because human beings at times falter in their understanding which may be due to a lack of knowledge or to a lack of deliberation or both.

iv. The Hadīth is a historical record of Prophetic teachings. It cannot change or modify the Qur'ān in any way. Its scope is confined to explaining and elucidating religion or in delineating the exemplar of the Prophet (sws). The Qur'ān is not dependent on the Hadīth for its explanation; On the contrary, the Hadīth need to be interpreted in the light of the Qur'ān.

2. The Sunnah is treated as an independent source of religion. It is distinct from Hadīth. Since at times the Hadīth also contains a record of the Sunnah, people have erroneously equated the two. The Sunnah refers to that tradition of Prophet Abraham's (sws) religion which the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) instituted among his followers as religion after reviving and reforming it and after making certain additions to it. The Sunnah was transmitted to the *ummah* by its perpetual adherence and thereby carrying the same stamp of authority as the Qur'ān.

3. The *sharī'ah* portion of the book has been entirely cleansed from *fiqh*. It is based purely on the author's understanding of the divine law. Areas of *fiqh* like the application of *sharī'ah* to specific circumstances or judgements in which the *sharī'ah* is silent and *ijtihād* is needed are not touched upon. This is because all these areas belong to human intellect and are prone to change with change in circumstances and to variation because of a variance in intellect.

4. The *sunnatullāh* (dealings and practices of God) have been separated from the *sharī'ah*. These dealings and practices emanate from God Himself and as such must not be undertaken by human beings in any way. In this regard, the most important of these divine practices: worldly punishment of the direct and immediate addressees of messengers of God who deliberately deny the truth is distinctly reflected in the contents of the book. Its specific nature is highlighted so that it is not confused as a directive of the *sharī'ah*.

5. The scheme of the book is based on the categorization of the Qur'ān regarding the contents of Islam. According to the author, the Qur'ān (2:231; 4:113; 63:2)

itself divides the contents of Islam into two categories: *al-Hikmah* and *al-Kitāb*. While the former refers to topics related to the philosophy of religion, the latter to those that relate to divine law (*sharī'ah*). He has further classified these two categories into sub-categories. *al-Hikmah* comprises two sub-categories: faith and ethics and *al-Kitāb* comprises ten sub-categories: The *Shari'ah* of Worship Rituals, The Social *Shari'ah*, The Political *Shari'ah*, The Economic *Shari'ah*, The *Shari'ah* of Preaching, The *Shari'ah* of Jihād, The Penal *Shari'ah*, The Dietary *Shari'ah*, Islamic Customs and Etiquette, and Oaths and their Atonements.

Consequently, Part I of this book consists of topics related to *al-Hikmah* and Part II consists of topics related to *al-Kitāb*. Two preambles to these two parts “Fundamental Principles” and “The Religion of Islam” introduce the reader to the hermeneutics which have led the author to his interpretation and to the overall framework of Islam respectively.

6. The overall interpretive approach can be termed as text-based. It is primarily the text of the Qur’ān which determines the purport of what constitutes Islam. Each section of a chapter of this book begins with a verse(s) of the Qur’ān which according to the author is the primary and foundational verse of the topic dealt with in that section. Qur’ānic verses cited subsequently in that section are of secondary nature to that topic. Needless to say that discovering the basic verse of a section helps the reader in grasping the primary Qur’ānic guidance on that topic in a precise manner.

Here I would like to express my deep gratitude to my friends and colleagues Asif Iftikhar, Tariq Mahmood Hashmi and Jhangeer Hanif for giving many useful suggestions to improve the language and standard of the translation. I am also greatly indebted to Iftikhar Tabassum for painstakingly tallying the translation with the original and giving valuable suggestions. I am also thankful to my colleague Izhar Ahmad for his hard work on the citations and references of this translation. I am no less indebted to Azeem Ayub for formatting the manuscript time and again and to Moazzam Safdar for supervising the printing process. May the Almighty reward all of them for their efforts.

I must also express my gratitude to my mother, wife and son who have greatly supported me all along in this task.

As a student of the author, I count myself very lucky to be able discuss directly with the author himself many expressions, sentences and concepts which needed clarification and explanation.

All footnote and bibliographic entries as well as text citation standards are in accordance with the fourteenth edition of The Chicago Manual of Style. The only exception is that of enumeration in which I have made slight innovations.²

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December, 2009

2. The headings and sub-headings follow the descending order sequence of 1., i., (1) and (i).

Bismillah of urdu mizan

Author's Foreword

The only religion acceptable to God is Islam. I have presented in this book my understanding of this religion. It is the result of my deliberations and musings spanning almost a quarter of a century. What appears sound in this book should be regarded as a favour from the Almighty and the outcome of what I have learnt from my illustrious mentor: Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī. What appears unsound should be attributed to my own oversight.

Javed Ahmad Ghāmidī
Al-Mawrid
10th April 1990

Preamble 1

Fundamental Principles

Religion is the guidance which was first inspired by the Almighty in human nature and after that it was given by Him with all essential details to mankind through His prophets. Muḥammad (sws) is the last of these prophets. Consequently, it is now he alone who in this world is the sole source of religion. It is only through him that man can receive divine guidance and it is only he who, through his words, deeds or tacit approvals, has the authority to regard something as part of Islam until the Day of Judgement. The Qur’ān says:

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأَمَمِينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَنْذِلُ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتٍ وَّيُرَكِّبُهُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ
(۶۲:۲)

It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from amongst themselves who recites out to them His verses and purifies them and [for this purpose] he instructs them in *sharī‘ah* and in *hikmah*. (62:2)

It is this *sharī‘ah* (law) and this *hikmah* (wisdom) which is the true religion termed as “Islam”. The source of this religion is the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) from whom it has been given to the *ummah* through the consensus of his Companions (rta) and through their perpetual practice and perpetual recitation in two forms:

1. The Qur’ān
2. The Sunnah

1. The Qur’ān

Every Muslim knows that the Qur’ān was revealed by Allah to Muḥammad (sws) – the last of the prophets – and it has since then remained with the *ummah* with the unanimous verdict from the *ummah* itself that it is this very book which was revealed to the Prophet (sws), and which his Companions (rta), through their consensus and through their perpetual recitation, delivered to the world without the slightest alteration.

2. The Sunnah

By Sunnah is meant that tradition of Prophet Abraham’s (sws) religion which the

Prophet Muhammad (sws) instituted among his followers as religion after reviving and reforming it and after making certain additions to it. The Qur'ān has directed Muhammad (sws) to obey the religion of Abraham (sws). This tradition is a part of it:

لَمْ أُوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ أَنْ تَبْعِدْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَيْفَا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١٦:١٢٣)

Then We revealed to you to follow the religion of Abraham, who was truly devoted and was not among the polytheists. (16:123)

The following portion of Islam has been given to us through the Sunnah:

Worship Rituals

- i. The Prayer
- ii. Zakāh and Ṣadaqah of ‘Īd al-Fiṭr
- iii. Fasting and I’tikāf
- iv. Hajj and ‘Umrah
- v. Animal Sacrifice and the *Takbīrs* during the days of *Tashrīq*¹

Social Sphere

- i. Marriage and Divorce and their relevant details
- ii. Abstention from coitus during the menstrual and the puerperal period

Dietary Sphere

- i. Prohibition of pork, blood, meat of dead animals and animals slaughtered in the name of someone other than Allah
- ii. Slaughtering in the prescribed manner of *tadḥkiyah* by pronouncing Allah's name

Customs and Etiquette

- i. Remembering Allah's name before eating or drinking and using the right hand for eating and drinking
- ii. Greeting one another with *al-Sālamu ‘Alaykum* (peace be to you) and responding with *Wa ‘Alaykum al-Salām* (and peace be to you)
- iii. Saying *al-Hamdulillāh* (praise be to Allah) after sneezing and responding to it by saying *Yarḥamukallāh* (may Allah have mercy on you)
- iv. Keeping moustaches trimmed
- v. Shaving pubic hair
- vi. Removing the hairs under the armpits
- vii. Paring fingernails
- viii. Circumcising the male offspring
- ix. Cleaning the nose, the mouth and the teeth
- x. Cleaning the body after excretion and urination
- xi. Bathing after the menstrual and the puerperal periods

1. The eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth of Dhū al-Hajj. (Translator)

- xii. *Ghusl-i Janābah*²
- xiii. Bathing the dead before burial
- xiv. Enshrouding a dead body and preparing it for burial
- xv. Burying the dead
- xvi. *'Id al-Fitr*
- xvii. *'Id al-Adhā*

This is all what the Sunnah is, and it can be said with certainty that there is no difference between it and the Qur'ān as far as their authenticity is concerned. Just as the Qur'ān has been received by the *ummah* through the consensus of the Prophet's Companions (rta) and through their perpetual recitation, the Sunnah has been received by it through their consensus and through their perpetual practice and stands validated like the Qur'ān in every period of time through the consensus of the *ummah*. Consequently, there is no doubt or debate about it now.

All that is Islam is constituted by these two sources. Nothing besides these two is Islam or can be regarded as its part.

Narratives which record the words, deeds or tacit approvals of the Prophet (sws) generally called Ḥadīth can, in the opinion of this writer, never provide certain knowledge. Hence, a Ḥadīth does not add anything to the beliefs and practices of religion. Ahādīth (plural of Ḥadīth) only explain and elucidate the religion contained in the Qur'ān and Sunnah and also describe the exemplary way in which the Prophet (sws) followed it. This only is the sphere of Ḥadīth which falls within the ambit of Islam. Outside this sphere, there exists no narrative which can be called or accepted as Ḥadīth.

Within this sphere, however, every person who after being convinced of a Ḥadīth accepts it as one containing the words, deeds or tacit approvals of the Prophet (sws) must follow it. In no circumstances can he evade or ignore it; in fact, it becomes incumbent upon him to accept any directive or decision of the Prophet (sws) found in that Ḥadīth.

The Qur'ān, Sunnah and Ḥadīth need to be understood; following are the principles which need to be kept in consideration by serious students for understanding them.

1. Principles of Understanding the Qur'ān

Let us first take a look at the principles of understanding the Qur'ān.

i. Appreciation of Classical Arabic

The Qur'ān has been revealed in the classical Arabic spoken in Makkah. It was spoken in the age of ignorance by the tribe of Quraysh. No doubt the Almighty has endowed it with inimitable eloquence and articulacy in the Qur'ān, yet as far

2. The ceremonial bath performed after ejaculation or after sexual intercourse.
(Translator)

as its substance is concerned, it is no different from the one spoken by the Messenger of God and which in those times was the tongue of the people of Makkah:

فَإِنَّمَا يَسِّرُنَا هُوَ بِلِسَانِكَ لِتُبَشِّرَ بِهِ الْمُتَّقِينَ وَتُنذِرَ بِهِ قَوْمًا لَّدُّا (٩٧:١٩)

Thus We have revealed to you this [Qur'ān] in your own tongue that through it you may proclaim glad tidings to the upright and fully warn the stubborn. (19:97)

Consequently, a correct understanding of this book is dependent on the correct knowledge and true appreciation of this language. It is essential that a person who wants to reflect on the Qur'ān and attempts to interpret and explain it should be a very competent scholar of this language. He should also be adept in appreciating its styles and linguistic features so that at least the language is not an impediment to him in understanding the Qur'ān.

No further explanation is required of the above mentioned fact; however, another important fact about the language of the Qur'ān which every student of this divine book should be well aware of is that its Arabic is not the Arabic in which poets like al-Harīrī (d. 516 AH) and al-Mutanabbī (d. 354 AH) composed their master-pieces nor is it the Arabic in which al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538 AH) and al-Razī (d. 606 AH) wrote their commentaries on the Qur'ān. It is also not the Arabic of the newspapers which are published in current times in Arab countries nor is it the Arabic prose and poetry written by their literati of today. No doubt, all this is Arabic too; however, it is very different from the Arabic of the Qur'ān which can rightly be termed as classical Arabic. Thus the difference in the vocabulary, idiom, style and construction of classical Arabic and the one spoken and written today is the same as the difference, for example, between the Urdu and Persian of Ghālib (d. 1869) and Mīr (d. 1810), and Sa'dī (d. 1292) and Khayyām (d. 1131) and the Urdu and Persian of the newspapers and journals of the Indian sub-continent and Iran. Similarly, this difference can be gauged if one compares the wide difference in the English of Shakespeare (d. 1616) and Milton (d. 1674) and the one written and spoken today in Britain, for example. It is thus an essential reality that not only contemporary or medieval Arabic has no role in creating an appreciation of the language, this Arabic is, in fact, detrimental to this appreciation, and if one becomes totally involved in it he may end up losing his understanding of the Qur'ān.

Consequently, the very first thing which a person must turn to in order to understand the language of the Qur'ān is the Qur'ān itself. No one can deny the fact that when it was revealed, the people of Makkah did dispute its divinity for a long time; however, no one was able to challenge its language. It said that it was not the work of a non-Arab because it was revealed in the most articulate Arabic. It declared itself to be a miracle of language and literature and that of lucidity and eloquence and dared the Quraysh to produce a *sūrah* like it. So much so, it challenged them to bring to their aid their literati, poets, soothsayers, orators and

even their jinn, devils and deities. It is, however, an irrefutable reality that none among the Arabs could refute the magnificence of its language nor was it possible for any person to respond to this challenge:

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَرَلْنَا عَلَى عَبْدِنَا فَأَثْوِا بِسُورَةٍ مِّنْ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٢٣:٢)

And if you doubt what We have revealed to Our servant, produce just one *sūrah* like it, and for this call upon all your supporters except God if you are truthful. (2:23)

فُلْ لَنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُ عَلَى أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ
بَعْضُهُمْ لِعْضٌ ظَهِيرًا (٨٨:١٧)

Tell them: “If men and jinn combined to produce a book like this Qur’ān, they would be unable to do so even if they become helpers of one another.” (17:88)

Moreover, when Wālid ibn al-Mughīrah, one of the finest critics of the language in Makkah at that time, heard it, his response was:

وَاللَّهُ مَا مِنْكُمْ رَجُلٌ أَعْرَفُ بِالأشْعَارِ مِنِي وَلَا أَعْلَمُ بِرِجْزِهِ وَلَا بِقُصْدِيهِ مِنِي وَلَا بِأشْعَارِ الْجِنِّ وَاللَّهُ مَا
يُشَبِّهُ الَّذِي يَقُولُ شَيْئًا مِنْ هَذَا وَاللَّهُ إِنْ لَقُولَهُ الَّذِي يَقُولُهُ حَلَاوةً وَإِنْ عَلَيْهِ لَطْلَاوةً وَإِنَّهُ لَمُشَرٌْ أَعْلَاهُ
مَغْدِقٌ أَسْفَلَهُ وَإِنَّهُ لَيَعْلُو وَلَا يَعْلِي وَإِنَّهُ لَيَحْطُمُ مَا تَحْتَهُ

By God! None among you is more aware than me of poetry neither martial songs nor eulogies nor the incantation of the jinn. By God! the words spoken by this person resemble none of these. By God! it is very pleasant and lively. Its branches are laden with fruit. Its roots are well-watered. It will definitely dominate [every other things] and nothing will be able to dominate it, and it will crush everything below it.³

From among the poets of the *al-Mu‘allaqāt al-sab‘* (The Seven Hanging Odes), Labīd (d. 661) was alive. A poet of the calibre of al-Farazdaq (d. 730) prostrated on one of his couplets;⁴ however, he too was dumbfounded before the Qur’ān.

3. Abū al-Fadā’ Ismā‘il ibn ‘Umar ibn Kathīr, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyah*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār ihyā al-turāth al-‘arabī, n.d.), 499.

4. The couplet is:

وَجَلَ السَّيُولُ عَنِ الطَّلَوْلِ كَأَنَّهَا
زَبَرٌ تَجِدُ مِنْهَا أَفْلَامَهَا
wa jala al-suyūl ‘an al-ṭalūl ka’annahā

When the caliph ‘Umar (rta) wished to hear his poetry from him, he replied: “How can I recite my couplets after God has taught me Baqarah and Āl-i ‘Imrān.”⁵

This was not merely the admission of a single person; it meant that the whole eloquence of the Arabs had surrendered before the sublimity of the Qur’ān.

Moreover, it is also an established reality that this astounding miracle of language and literature has been transmitted to us without any change whatsoever. Thus, it is an acknowledged fact that the Qur’ān is not only the final and ultimate authority in all matters of religion, it also represents the final criterion and standard for the language of its times.

After the Qur’ān, we can find this language in the Ahādīth of the Prophet (sws) and the Āthār of the Companions (rta). No doubt, a very small portion of them has been transmitted verbatim and thus in a position to be presented as a criterion and as a representative of classical Arabic, yet whatever portion we have of it is a great treasure for students of this language. This is the language of the Prophet (sws) whose eloquence is matchless and that of the Companions (rta) who spoke in the same diction. Its words and idioms and styles and construction are the best examples of the language in which the Qur’ān was revealed. Since original words have been preserved in the supplications of the Prophet (sws), in his conversations with his Companions (rta) and in the various parables that he stated to explain some aspect of religion, the parallels of this language can be observed in these three types of narratives the most. Thus if students of the Qur’ān consult these sources, they can gather invaluable samples of classical Arabic which can help them in understanding both difficult words as well as the background and occasions on which they are spoken in the Qur’ān.

After these three, the greatest source for classical Arabic is the classical literature of the Arabs. Within the corpus of this literature are the works of celebrated poets like Imru’ al-Qays (d. 544), Zuhayr (d. 609), ‘Amr ibn Kulthūm (d. 584), Labīd (d. 661), al-Nābighah (d. 604), Tarafah (d. 569), ‘Antarah (d. 601), al-A’shā (d. 629) and Hārith ibn Halizzah (d. 580) and orators like Quss ibn Sā‘idah (d. 600). Scholars of this field know that a greater part of this literature is found in the anthologies of the poets and in ‘Aṣma‘īyāt,⁶ Mufaddaliyāt,⁷

zuburuṇ tujiddu mutūnahā aqlāmuḥā

(The flowing floods have made these ruins so bare [from the dust that had covered them] as if they are books whose texts have been re-written by pens.) See: Abū Zayd Muḥammad ibn Abī al-Khaṭṭāb al-Qurashī, *Jamhurah ash‘ar al-‘arab* (Beirut: Dār al-qalam, n.d.), 109.

5. ما كتَبَ لَا قُولَ شِعْرًا بَعْدَ أَنْ عَلِمْنَى اللَّهُ الْبَقَرَةَ وَآلَ عَمْرَانَ. See: Yūsuf ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Al-Istī‘āb fī ma‘rifah al-ashāb*, 1st ed., vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-jil, 1412 AH), 1337.

6. The author is Abū Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Mālik ibn Qurayb al-Asma‘ī (d. 216 AH).

7. The author is al-Mufaddal ibn Muḥammad ibn Ya‘lā ibn ‘Āmir ibn Sālim al-Dabbī (d. 165 AH).

Hamāsah,⁸ *al-Mu‘allaqāt al-sab*,⁹ and in the works of literati like al-Jāhīz (d. 255 AH) and al-Mubarrad (d. 286 AH).¹⁰ Many collections of the poetical works of those times have now been published which were not available to date. Undoubtedly, a greater part of the Arabic language has been transmitted to us through consensus and *tawātur* and is preserved in primary works like: *al-Tahdhīb*,¹¹ *al-Muḥkam*,¹² *al-Ṣīḥāh*,¹³ *al-Jamhurah*¹⁴ and *al-Nihāyah*,¹⁵ however, this also is a fact that the greatest source of the portion of the language which has not been transmitted through *tawātur* is also the classical Arabic literature of that age. Though it does have some portions which were concocted later and attributed to that age, however just as scholars of Ḥadīth can distinguish between rightly and wrongly reported narratives, in the same manner, critics of the Arabic language can distinguish the original from the concocted on the basis of objective standards of textual criticism. Consequently, it is for this very reason that the scholars of language and literature are unanimous on the fact that after the Qur’ān it is this classical literature which can be depended upon and which because of its integrity in transmission and verbatim nature of transmission occupies the ultimate standard in research on the language. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Baghdādī writes:

الكلام الذى يستشهد به نوعان : شعر و غيره ، فسائل الاول قد قسمه العلماء على طبقات
اربع. الطبقة الاولى : الشعراء الجاهليون ، وهم قبل الاسلام كامرئ القيس والاعشى ، والثانية
: المخضرون ، وهم الذين ادركوا الجاهلية و الاسلام كلبيد و حسان ، والثالثة : المتقدمون ،
ويقال لهم الاسلاميون ، وهم الذين كانوا في صدر الاسلام كحرير والفرزدق ، والرابعة :
المولدون ، ويقال لهم الحديثون ، وهم من بعدهم الى زماننا كبشّار بن برد و ابي نواس :
فالطبقتان الاوليان يستشهد بشعرهما اجمعان

8. The author is Abū Tammām Ḥabīb ibn Aws al-Ṭā’ī (d. 231 AH).

9. This is a selection of seven odes belonging to the *jāhiliyyah* period.

10. For example al-Jahīz’s *Al-Bayān wa al-tabyīn* and al-Mubarrad’s *Al-Kāmil fi al-lughah wa al-adab*. Similiary, *Jamhurah ash-‘ar al-‘arab* by Abū Zayd al-Qurashī (d. 170 AH), *Mukhtārāt shu‘arā al-‘arab* by Ibn al-Shajarī (d. 542 AH), *Al-Fuhūl* by Abū Tammām (d. 231 AH), *Ḥamāsah* by Buhturī (d. 284 AH), Ibn al-Shajarī and Abū Ḥilāl al-‘Askarī (d. 395 AH) and *Dīwān al-ma‘āni* by Abū Ḥilāl are also similar collections.

11. *Al-Tahdhīb fī al-lughah* by Abū Mansūr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Azharī (d. 370 AH).

12. *Al-Muḥkam wa al-muḥīṭ al-a‘zam* by Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Ismā‘īl ibn Sīdah (d. 458 AH).

13. *Tāj al-lughah wa ṣīḥah al-‘arabiyyah* by Abū Naṣr Ismā‘īl al-Jawharī (d. 393 AH).

14. *Al-Jamhurah fī al-lughah* by Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Durayd al-Azdī (d. 321 AH).

15. *Al-Nihāyah fī gharīb al-hadīth wa al-āthār* by Abū al-Sa‘dāt al-Mubārak ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Athīr al-Jazarī (d. 606 AH)

A discourse from which parallels are presented to substantiate the meanings of words and phrases is of two types: poetry and prose. The first of these has been divided by scholars into four categories. The first category is of poets who belonged to the *jāhiliyyah* period (age of ignorance) that prevailed in Arabia before Islam, such as Imru' al-Qays and al-A'shā. The second is of the *mukhadramūn* who lived in both pre-Islamic and Islamic times such as Labīd and Hassān (d. 35-40 AH). The third is the *mutaqaddimūn* who are also called the *islamiyūn*. These are poets who belonged to the first period of Islam such as Jarīr (d. 110 AH) and al-Farazdaq. The fourth is the *muwallidūn* who are also called the *muhdithūn*. Included in this category are all poets who belonged to the period after the three categories till our own times such as Bashshār ibn Bard (d. 167 AH) and Abū Nuwās (d. 199 AH). There is a consensus that parallels to substantiate the meanings of words and phrases shall be drawn from the poets of the first two categories.¹⁶

Quite similarly, 'Umar (rta) is reported to have said:

عليكم بديوانكم لا تضلوا قالوا وما ديواننا قال شعر الجاهلية فإن قيه تفسير كتابكم ومعاني كلامكم

If you preserve your poetry, you will not go astray. People asked: "What are our poetic collections?" He said: "The poetry of the *jāhiliyyah* period because it contains the *tafsīr* of your Book and also the meaning of your language."¹⁷

Ibn 'Abbās (rta), a celebrated Companion of the Prophet (sws), said:

إذا سألتم عن غريب القرآن فالتمسونه في الشعر فإن الشعر ديوان العرب

If you want to understand the meaning of a Qur'ānic word little known to you, look for it in poetry because it is this poetry which is the record of the Arabs.¹⁸

Another thing which needs to be appreciated is that this classical literature of the *jāhiliyyah* period is not only a source of the language and its various styles, it also reflects the culture and civilization of the Arabs. If a person does not have the right knowledge about these, it becomes difficult for him to understand the various references, allusions and figures of speech which are the real constituents of this masterpiece of literature. What were the characteristics of the society of the Arabs? What were the things they regarded as *ma'rūf* and *munkar*? What were the

16. 'Abd al-Qādir ibn 'Umar al-Baghdādī, *Khazānah al-adab fī lubb-i lubāb lisān al-'arab*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār ḫālid, n.d.), 3.

17. Nāṣir al-Dīn Abū al-Khayr 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar al-Baydāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa asrār al-ta'wīl*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1996), 401.

18. Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Kamāl al-Dīn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn Sābiq al-Dīn al-Suyūtī, *Al-Muzhir fī 'ulūm al-lughah wa al-adab*, 1st ed., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmīyah, 1998), 261.

standards of good and evil in their society? What was the nature of their religion and traditions? What were the foundations of their culture and what were the constituents of their social fabric? What were their political ideologies and daily involvements and hobbies? Were they really a bunch of uncivilized people whom Islam elevated to the status of the conquerors of the world or in spite of their savagery, they did possess certain features and characteristics which made them eligible to receive a book as lofty as the Qur'ān, and they were bestowed with the status of witnesses to the truth by the Almighty? The correct answer to all these questions is only found in this Book, and it is this answer through which the various allusions, references, insinuations and implications of the Qur'ān become evident to its student with their true literary splendour and meaningfulness.

Thus it is not merely for language but also all these things for which a student of the Qur'ān must consult this classical literature.

ii. Eloquence of Language

The Qur'ān has not merely been revealed in Arabic: it has been revealed in eloquent Arabic. The language is clear and cogent, and there is no vagueness in it; every word is unambiguous and every style adopted is well known to its addressees. The Qur'ān says:

نَزَّلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيًّا مُّبِينً (٢٦: ١٩٣-١٩٥)

The faithful Spirit has brought it down into your heart [O Prophet] that you may become a warner [for people] in eloquent Arabic. (26:193-195)

قُر'اً نَا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ (٣٩: ٢٨)

In the form of an Arabic Qur'ān, free from any ambiguity that they may save themselves [from punishment]. (39:28)

This is an obvious reality about the Qur'ān. If this premise is accepted, then it must be conceded that no word used or style adopted by the Qur'ān is rare or unknown (*shādh*). Its words and styles are well known and conventionally understood by its addressees. No aspect of the language has any peculiarity or rarity in it. Consequently, while interpreting the Qur'ān, the conventionally understood and known meanings of the words should be taken into consideration.

Apart from them, no interpretation is acceptable. Thus in the verses: وَالنَّجْمُ وَالشَّجَرُ (٥٥: ٦) وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنَ النَّجْمٍ can only be “stars”. In the meaning of the word يَسْجُدُونَ (٥٥: ٥٥), the word السَّجْدَةَ can only be “prostration”. In the verse فَلَمَّا كَانَ رَبِيعُ الْأَوَّلِ (٢٢: ٥٢)، the word فَلَمَّا can only mean “when” and the word الْأَوَّلِ can only mean “first”. In the verse كَيْفَ خُلِقُوا (٨٨: ١٧), the word كَيْفَ can only mean “desire”. In the verse كَيْفَ خُلِقَ الْإِبْلُ (٨٨: ١٧), the word الْإِبْلُ has only been used for “camel”. The only meaning of the word كَيْفَ يَصْرُخُ (٣٧: ٤٦) in the verse كَيْفَ يَصْرُخُ الْمُكْفُونُ is “eggs”. In the verse فَصَلَ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحَرْ (١٠٨: ٢)، the word فَصَلَ can only mean “sacrifice”. They do not mean “plants”, “recital”, “clouds”, “the hidden sheath of eggs” and “folding hands on the chest” respectively.

Similar is the case with declensions and styles adopted. Scholars of grammar and

rhetoric have regarded many such aspects of the Qur'ān as rare and as exceptions; however, the truth of the matter is that this conclusion is based on incomprehensive research. In recent times, the works of the two pioneers of the Farāhī school: Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī and Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī have fully proven that the declensions and styles adopted by the Qur'ān are all in fact well-known and conventionally understood by the Arabs. Students of the Qur'ān who have a flare for these aspects of the language of the Qur'ān can obtain a lot of guidance from Imām al-Farāhī's *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*,¹⁹ *Asqalib al-Qur'ān*,²⁰ *Jamhurah al-balāghah*²¹ and *Majmū'ah-i tafāsīr*²² and from Imām Iṣlāḥī's *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*.²³

Taking into consideration this principle is a requisite of the eloquence of the Qur'ānic language, which as stated above, is mentioned in the Qur'ān itself. No explanation of the Qur'ān is acceptable while disregarding this principle.

iii. Uniqueness of Style

The Qur'ān has a unique style. It has the simplicity and continuity found in prose, yet it is not prose. It has the beat, rhythm and poise of poetry, yet it is not poetry. It is not the book we are usually acquainted with in which there are chapters and sections which deal with a specific topic or topics. The people of Arabia would sometimes call it as poetry and sometimes likened it to rhymed prose of the soothsayers, and it is this uncertainty of theirs which itself shows that they were not satisfied with what they said about it. In reality, the Qur'ān is a unique book as per its style. It has the flow of tumultuous torrents and the vigour of pounding seas waves. Its sound reasoning has many variations that cannot be emulated; topics are connected to one another with subtle harmony; it cites stories and anecdotes; the discourse returns to its central theme every now and then; verses which portray threat, intimidation and punishment are found in various styles; other verses depict sorrow and longing; emphatic expressions are another hallmark of its style; similarly, we find verses which express intense emotions of disgust, indifference and unconcern. Instances which reflect warmth and affection are as warm and affectionate as dew drops and instances which reflect wrath and rage are as fiery and resounding as thunder. The unique ways of address it contains simply enchant a reader to a state of trance. It is because of this unique and inimitable style that the Almighty says:

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْتُهُ خَائِشًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتَلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرُبُهَا

19. Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī, *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*, 1st ed., Azamgarh: Dā'irah ḥamīdiyyah, 1358 AH.

20. Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī, *Rasā'il fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 2nd ed., Azamgarh: Dā'irah ḥamīdiyyah, 1991.

21. Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī, *Jamhurah al-balāghah*, 1st ed., Azamgarh: Dā'irah ḥamīdiyyah, 1360 AH.

22. Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī, *Majmū'ah tafāsīr*, 2nd ed., Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1986.

23. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, 2nd ed., 9 vols. Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1985.

لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٢١:٥٩)

Had We brought down this Qur'ān upon a mountain, [O Prophet!] You would have seen it humble itself and break asunder for fear of God. And we mention these parables to these people that they may deliberate. (59:21)

But what exactly is the genre of the Qur'ān? What at best can be said as an answer to this question is that it resembles an oration. No doubt this is only a mere resemblance; it cannot be termed oratory in the strict sense of the word. However, it does come close to it, and on this basis the following things should remain in consideration before a student of the Qur'ān:

Firstly, in order to understand the Qur'ān, its ambience should be studied; this means that the background, situation and the requisites be determined in which a *sūrah* was revealed. Nothing is required for this beyond deliberation on the Qur'ān itself, and the light of the Qur'ān itself suffices for this. When a person deliberates on the Qur'ān, concentrates on each and every word of it, tries to understand the rhythm and beat of the words and the construction of the sentences, the occasions on which a discourse is uttered become fully clear. Such is the extent of this clarity that they become an evidence on themselves and no external argument is required for any corroboration. Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī writes:

... the only correct way is to comprehend the background from indications and clues found within the Qur'ān. Once a person is able to ascertain the addressees of the discourse such that which among them are addressed directly and which indirectly; what is the phase whose circumstances the addressees are facing; what are the questions which have been raised by this phase whose answer is awaited by both friend and foe; what is the nature of the hostility by the enemies and what are the circumstances in which allies and friends find themselves in; what are various groups which have joined forces with the enemies while adopting various measures and tactics and what are the thoughts of the allies and associates, then the whole structure and sequence of the discourse becomes fully evident. All these aspects speak of themselves within the drift of the discourse. Thus if they are ascertained through hard work, the whole sequence and arrangement of the Qur'ān becomes fully evident and the effect of reading a *sūrah* is the same as that of listening to an apt and timely oration of a great orator.²⁴

Secondly, the direction of address of the Qur'ān should be ascertained at each place. The direction of address shifts a number of times in the Qur'ān at very short intervals and sometimes even in a single verse. At one instant, Muslims would be the addressees, and, at the next, the *mushrikūn* would become the addressees; similarly, the People of the Book would be addressed in a verse and all of a sudden the address would shift to the Muslims. A similar shift is experienced in singular

24. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Mabādī Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, 1st ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1988), 210.

and plural entities. This change occurs both in the speaker and the spoken to. At one instant, the speaker would be God and then suddenly Gabriel would assume the speaker's role. At another instant, the speaker would be Gabriel and then suddenly the discourse would emanate from the mouth of Muḥammad (sws). In short, just as an orator shifts from one addressee to another by shift in his tone, facial expressions and the grandeur of the words used, in a similar manner, the address in the Qur'ān also changes rapidly. Thus it is essential that this aspect must be given full consideration while interpreting and explaining the Qur'ān. It should be ascertained whether the speaker for example is God, Gabriel, the Prophet (sws) or the people. Similarly, it should be determined whether the spoken to is God, the Prophet (sws) or the people. Among the people, it must be ascertained if they are Muslims or Hypocrites or the People of the Book or the Idolaters among the Ishmaelites or if they are two or three among these or if all of them are spoken to. Then there may be instances of ambiguity in address as well. Sometimes, a verse would apparently address the Prophet (sws); however, in reality the address would be directed at the Muslim *ummah*. Similarly, an apparent address to him would actually be directed at the leadership of the Quraysh or to the People of the Book. Examples of such address abound in the Qur'ān. Thus it is essential that this distinction be made with full caution, and it be fully ascertained who the actual addressee is. Without this, the real purport of the Qur'ān cannot be grasped.

Thirdly, general and specific verses should be differentiated. There are many places in the Qur'ān where the words are general; however, the context testifies with full certainty that something specific is meant. The Qur'ān uses the word *النَّاسُ* (people), but it does not refer to all the people of the world; and many a time, it does not even refer to all the people of Arabia: it refers to a group among them. It uses the expression *كُلِّهِ عَلَى الْدِينِ* (on all the religions), and it does not refer to all religions of the world; it refers to *المُشْرِكُونَ* (polytheists) but they do not refer to all those who are guilty of polytheism. Similarly, the words *إِنْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ* (and from these People of the Book) do not refer to all the People of Book of the world. It mentions the word *الإِنْسَانُ* (man) but it does not refer to mankind. This then is a common style of the Qur'ān, and if it is not taken into consideration while explaining and interpreting the Qur'ān, a person can end up misunderstanding the whole purport of the Qur'ān. Thus it is of paramount importance that the interpretation of words of the Qur'ān must always remain subservient to its context and usage.

iv. The Final Authority

The Qur'ān is a *mīzān* (the scale that tells good from evil) and a *fūrqān* (the distinguisher between good and evil) on this earth and a *muhaymin* (guardian) over other divine scriptures:

اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَالْمِيزَانَ (٤٢: ١٧)

It is God who has revealed with truth the Book which is the scale. (42:17)

In this verse, the particle و (waw) is for explication, and thus the word *al-mīzān* is actually used to connote *al-kitāb*. The verse means that the Almighty has revealed the Qur'ān which is a scale of justice meant to distinguish good from evil. People can judge good and evil through it. It is the only scale that weighs everything else, and there is no scale in which it can be weighed:

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا (١٤:٢٥)

Blessed be He who has revealed *al-furqān* to His servant so that it may warn the whole world. (25:1)

The Qur'ān is also *al-furqān* in the same sense, ie a book which is the final and absolute verdict in distinguishing truth from falsehood. This word also connotes the fact that this Book is the standard on which everything needs to be judged and is a decisive word on matters which relate to religion. Everyone must turn to it only to resolve differences of opinion. Nothing can be a judge on it; it shall reign supreme in the dominion of religion and divine guidance, and every person is bound not to make it subservient to any other thing:

وَأَنَّزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَمِّمًا عَلَيْهِ فَاحْكُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ (٤٨:٥)

And [O Prophet!] We have revealed to you this Book with truth in confirmation of the Book before it, and standing as a guardian over it. Therefore, give judgement among them according to the guidance revealed by God, and do not yield to their whims by swerving from the truth revealed to you. (5:48)

Here the word used to connote the above sense is *muhaymin* (guardian). It is an adjective formed from the words هَمِيمَنْ فَلَانْ عَلَىٰ كَذَا which means “a guardian” and “a protector”. In this verse, the Qur'ān has been regarded as a *muhaymin* on the previous scriptures. It means that the Qur'ān is the real authentic and trustworthy version of the Book of God. Thus, when the texts of other scriptures were lost to posterity and their translations were greatly tampered with, it was this Qur'ān which was reposed with the status of judging between the right and wrong of those scriptures. Whatever it judges to be right is right and whatever it judges to be wrong is wrong and must necessarily be rejected.

This is the status of the Qur'ān which it has asserted about itself. Consequently, on the basis of this status, the following principles need to be adhered to:

Firstly, no divine revelation extraneous to the Qur'ān and not even the Prophet (sws), to whom this Qur'ān was revealed, can specify a general directive of the Qur'ān or alter any of its directives. Everything shall be accepted as religion or rejected that it is not on the basis of the Qur'ān. Everything accepted in religion shall be rigorously scrutinized under the light of this Divine Guidance. All basis of belief and faith shall be directly derived from it. Every revelation, inspiration, research and opinion shall be subservient to the Qur'ān, and it shall be

acknowledged that even the works of great jurists like Abū Ḥanīfah and al-Shāfi‘ī, scholars of Ḥadīth like al-Bukhārī and Muslim, theologians like al-Ash‘arī and al-Māturīdī, *sūfīs* like Junayd and Shiblī must be weighed in the scales of this *mīzān*, and nothing can be accepted from them which is not in consonance with it.

Secondly, the text of the Qur’ān is univocal. The meaning conveyed by each word of it is definitive. Whatever it intends to say, it says with full certainty and there is no ambiguity about it. In no issue is it unable to convey what it wants to. The meanings of its words perfectly match the words, and the meanings do not in any way contradict what the words say. The only way to approach the Qur’ān in order to understand it is through its words. With full certainty these words convey what they stand for and there is no question of any doubt or ambiguity in this regard.

Both these things are a natural corollary of the fact that the Qur’ān is *mīzān* and *fūraqān*. There can be no two opinions about it. However, there are certain questions, which might create doubts in the minds of certain people in this regard:

Firstly, there exist at some places differences of reading the Qur’ān. These differences are not only due to a difference in pronouncing words but at times are also of the sort which effect the meanings they convey. Apparently, there is no decisive thing which on such instances is able to resolve the difference. For example, if the word أَرْجُلُكُمْ in 5:5 can be read both in the accusative and in the genitive, then how can it be said with certainty on the basis of the Qur’ān whether in *wudū* feet need to be washed or just wiped.

Secondly, what we understand from the Qur’ān is understood from its words and the way in which its sentences are constructed. The disciplines on which this understanding is dependent – syntax, morphology and lexicography etc – are not definitive (*dhaññī*). How then can it be said that the meanings which words convey are absolutely certain? This question has been raised by Imām al-Rāzī in the following words:

دلالة الألفاظ على معانيها ظنية لأنها موقوفة على نقل اللغات ونقل الإعرابات والتصريفات مع
أن أول أحوال تلك الناقلين أنهم كانوا آحاداً ورواية الآحاد لا تفيد إلا الظن وأيضاً فتلك
الدلائل موقوفة على عدم الاشتراك وعدم المجاز وعدم التقليل وعدم التخصيص
وعدم المعارض العقلي فإن بتقدير حصوله يجب صرف اللفظ إلى المجاز ولا شك أن اعتقاد هذه
المقدمات ظن محض والمحظى على الظن أولى أن يكون ظناً

The intentionality of a text is speculative because it is dependent on the transmission of words with their meanings, declensions and inflections. Moreover, the transmitters were *ahād* and it is acknowledged about such transmitters that what they have transmitted cannot be taken to be totally preserved in its original form. Moreover, determining this intentionality of the text is dependent on the fact that the same word may stand for more than one entity, a word may be used figuratively, a word may have changed its meanings, a word may have been used concisely, a word may be used

without limiting its meaning or used in contradiction to some logical premise because if there is such a contradiction, then it is essential that a word be understood to be used figuratively. Undoubtedly, all these premises are accepted because of their speculative nature and what is based on speculation is all the more speculative.²⁵

Thirdly, it has been mentioned in the Qur'ān that some of its verses are *muḥkam* and certain others are *mutashābih*, and the Qur'ān itself has specified about the latter that only God knows their meaning. This strips the Qur'ān of its status of the final judge. If we are not able to distinguish the *muḥkam* from the *mutashābih*, and are also unable to understand what the *mutashābih* mean then how can we determine the purport of the Qur'ān in these verses, and how can we regard it to be the final authority on the basis of this purport on other things?

Fourthly, there are certain Ahādīth which seemingly alter the meaning of the Qur'ān. Our scholars at some instances call it *naskh* (abrogation) and at others call it as *tahdīd*, *takhsīṣ* or *taqyīd*. If this is accepted, then how can the Qur'ān have the status of being the *mīzān* and the *fūrqān* referred to above?

These are the questions which are generally posed in this regard. Following are the answers:

(1) Variant Readings

The answer to the first question is that the Qur'ān is only what is recorded in the *muṣḥaf*, and which, except for some areas of North Africa, is recited by a vast majority of the Muslim *ummah*. None else except the reading on which this Qur'ān is recited is the Qur'ān or can be presented in the capacity and status of the Qur'ān. Thus we think that this question does not even arise.

In the following paragraphs, we shall present the details of this view.

The Qur'ān says:

سُنْنَرِئُكَ فَلَا تَنْسِي إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ وَمَا يَخْفِي (٨٧:٦-٧)

Soon We shall recite [all of] it to you [O Prophet!]; then you will not forget except what Allah pleases. He indeed knows what is apparent before [you] at this time, and that also which is concealed [from you]. (87:6-7)

لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لَتَعْجِلَ بِهِ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنُهُ فَإِذَا قَرَأْنَاهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ
(١٩-١٦ :٧٥)

[To acquire] this [Qur'ān] swiftly [O Prophet!] do not move your tongue hastily over it. Indeed, upon Us is its collection and recital. So when We have recited it, follow this recital [of Ours]. Then upon Us is to explain it [wherever need be]. (75:16-19)

25. Fakhr al-Dīn Muhammad ibn ‘Umar al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmīyyah, 1421 AH), 34.

The scheme of God regarding the revelation and collection of the Qur’ān mentioned in these verses can be stated as follows:

Firstly, the Prophet (sws) has been told that the way the Qur’ān is being revealed piecemeal to him keeping in view the circumstances is the correct way of revelation; however, he should not worry about its protection and collection and arrangement. A new recital would ensue after this chronological one. At that time, if the Almighty intends to revoke something on the basis of His wisdom, He will do so and then have the Prophet (sws) read it in a manner that he will not forget any part of it and the Qur’ān will be consigned to him in its very final form which will remain protected.

Secondly, this second recital would take place once the Qur’ān has been arranged in the form of a book, and simultaneously he would be bound to follow this recital in future. He would then not be allowed to read the Qur’ān according to its previous recital.

Thirdly, it was told that if any directive needed further explanation, it would be done so at this second recital, and in this manner this book would stand completed in every way after collection and arrangement and explanation by the Almighty Himself.

It is this second and final recital of the Qur’ān which is also termed as *al-‘ardah al-akhīrah* (the final presentation). It is evident from various narratives that each year Gabriel would read out the Qur’ān revealed in that year to the Prophet (sws) during the month of Ramadān. In the last year, in the *al-‘ardah al-akhīrah*, he read out the Qur’ān to him twice.

Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrates:

كَانَ يُعْرَضُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنُ كُلَّ عَامٍ مَرَّةً فَعُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ مَرَّتَيْنِ فِي الْعَامِ
الَّذِي قُبِضَ فِيهِ

Each year the Qur’ān would be read out to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) once; however, the year he died, it was read out to him twice.²⁶

The Prophet (sws) used to read the Qur’ān on this recital till he died. After him, the rightly guided caliphs, and all the Companions (rta) from among the Muḥājirūn and the Anṣār would read the Qur’ān on this recital. There was no difference in this regard between them. Later, it was this recital which was called the *al-qirā’at al-‘āmmah*. Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī (d. 73 AH) reports:

كَانَتْ قِرَاءَةُ أَبِي بَكْرٍ وَعُمَرَ وَعُثْمَانَ وَزَيْدَ بْنِ ثَابَتِ وَالْمَهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَاحِدَةً كَانُوا
يَقْرَئُونَ الْقِرَاءَةَ الْعَامَةَ وَهِيَ الْقِرَاءَةُ الَّتِي قَرَأَهَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَلَى جَبَرِيلَ مَرَتَيْنِ

26. Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘il al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 2nd ed. (Riyāḍ: Dār al-ṣalām, 1999), 896, (no. 4998).

في العام الذي قبض فيه وكان زيد قد شهد العرضة الأخيرة وكان يقرئ الناس بها حتى مات.

The reading of Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān and Zayd ibn Thābit and that of all the Muḥājirūn and the Anṣār was the same. They would read the Qur’ān according to the *al-qirā’at al-‘āmmah*. This is the same reading which was read out twice by the Prophet (sws) to Gabriel in the year of his death. Zayd ibn Thābit²⁷ was also present in this reading [called] the *al-‘ardah al-akhīrah*. It was this very reading that he taught the Qur’ān to people till his death.²⁸

Consequently, it is only this recital which possesses oral *tawātūr* from the time of the Companions (rta) to date. Our scholars generally call it the *qirā’at* of Ḥafṣ (d. 180 AH) whereas it is actually *al-qira’at al-‘āmmah* and classical scholars, as pointed out above, actually introduce it by this name. Ibn Sīrīn narrates:

القراءة التي عُرِضَتْ على النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي الْعَامِ الَّذِي قُبِضَ فِيهِ هِيَ الْقِرَاءَةُ الَّتِي
يَقْرُؤُهَا النَّاسُ الْيَوْمَ.

The reading on which the Qur’ān was read out to the Prophet (sws) in the year of his death is the same according to which people are reading the Qur’ān today.²⁹

If the Qur’ān is deliberated upon in the light of its coherence and arrangement, internal evidence from within the Qur’ān also pronounces this very judgement. The work which has been done by the scholars of the Farāhī school of thought on the Qur’ān in recent times speaks volumes that the text of the Qur’ān does not accept the variant readings. A person can see examples of this at many instances in Islāḥī’s *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*. He writes:

Differences in variant readings have also been resolved in this commentary. The conventional and *mutawātir* reading is only the one on which the Qur’ān has been written, which we have in our hands. In this reading, the interpretation of each and every word and verse of the Qur’ān is done in such a manner in the light of classical Arabic literature, coherence and parallels of the Qur’ān that no doubt remains. Consequently, I have interpreted each

27. Besides him, other Companions (rta) would certainly have been present during the *al-‘ardah al-akhīrah*. Consequently, a narrative reported by ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās (rta) mentions that ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd (rta) was also a witness to this event. See: Abū al-Qāsim Sulaymān ibn Ahmad al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, 2nd ed., vol. 12 (Mawsil: Maktabah al-zahrā, 1983), 103, (no. 12602).

28. Abū ‘Abdullāh Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Bahādur ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Zarkashī, *Al-Burhān fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1980), 237.

29. Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Kamāl al-Dīn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn Sābiq al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Baydār: Manshūrāt al-raḍī, 1343 AH), 177.

verse on the basis of this reading and can say with full confidence that if this interpretation is done on the basis of some other readings then it can only be done at the expense of sacrificing the eloquence, wisdom and meaningfulness of the Qur'ān.³⁰

Here, it is possible that the narrative on the *Seven Ahruf* might cause some confusion to some people in this regard. The narrative reads:

عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ عَبْدِ الْقَارِيِّ أَنَّهُ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ عُمَرَ بْنَ الْخَطَّابَ يَقُولُ سَمِعْتُ هِشَامَ بْنَ حَكِيمَ بْنَ حِزَامٍ يَقُولُ سُورَةً الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى غَيْرِ مَا أَقْرَوْهَا وَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَقْرَأَنِيهَا فَكَدْتُ أَنْ أَعْجَلَ عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ أَمْهَلْتُهُ حَتَّى انْصَرَفَ ثُمَّ كَبَيْتُهُ بِرِدَائِهِ فَجَحْتُ بِهِ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي سَمِعْتُ هَذَا يَقُولُ سُورَةً الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى غَيْرِ مَا أَقْرَأَنِيهَا فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَرْسَلْتُهُ ثُمَّ قَالَ اقْرُأْ يَا هِشَامُ فَقَرَأَ الْقِرَاةَ الَّتِي سَمِعْتُهُ يَقُولُ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ هَكَذَا أُتَرَلَتْ ثُمَّ قَالَ لِي اقْرُأْ فَقَرَأَنِيهَا فَقَالَ هَكَذَا أُتَرَلَتْ إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ أُتَرَلَ عَلَى سَبْعَةِ أَحْرُفٍ فَاقْرُءُوا مَا يَسِّرَ مِنْهُ

'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Abd al-Qārī narrated: " 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said before me: 'I heard Hishām ibn Ḥakīm ibn Ḥizām reading Sūrah Furqān in a different way from the one I used to read it, and the Prophet (sws) himself had read out this *sūrah* to me. Consequently, as soon as I heard him, I wanted to get hold of him. However, I gave him respite until he had finished the prayer. Then I got hold of his cloak and dragged him to the Prophet (sws). I said to him: "I have heard this person [Hishām ibn Ḥakīm ibn Ḥizām] reading Sūrah Furqān in a different way from the one you had read it out to me." ' The Prophet (sws) said: "Leave him alone [O 'Umar]." Then he said to Hishām: "Read [it]." ['Umar said:] "He read it out in the same way as he had done earlier." [At this,] the Prophet (sws) said: "It was revealed thus." Then the Prophet (sws) asked me to read it out. So I read it out. [At this], he said: "It was revealed thus; this Qur'ān has been revealed in *Seven Ahruf*. You can read it in any of them you find easy from among them."'"³¹

If the following points about this narrative are kept in contemplation, it becomes evident that it is an absolutely meaningless narrative which should not be considered of any worth in this regard:

Firstly, even though this narrative has been recorded in the basic books of Ḥadīth literature, no one in history has ever been able to offer a convincing explanation of it rendering it totally ambiguous. Al-Suyūtī³² has recorded several

30. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 8, 8.

31. Abū 'Abdullāh Mālik ibn Anas, *Al-Mu'atta'* (Peshawar: Al-Maktabah al-haqqāniyah, n.d.), 130, (no. 567).

32. Al-Suyūtī, *Al-Itqān*, vol. 1, 165-172.

interpretations of this narrative, and then while acknowledging the untenability of each of these has confessed that this narrative should be regarded among the *mutashābihāt*, whose meaning is only known to God.

وأرجحها عندي قول من قال : إن هذا من المتشابه الذي لا يدرى تأويله

And to me the best opinion in this regard is that of the people who say that this Ḥadīth is from among matters of *mutashābihāt*, the meaning of which cannot be understood.³³

Secondly, the only plausible interpretation of the word *aḥruf* is that it connotes pronunciation of words³⁴ the Arabs were used to. However, in this case, the text of the Ḥadīth itself negates this meaning. It is known that both ‘Umar (rta) and Hishām (rta) belonged to the same tribe: the Quraysh. Obviously, people of the same tribe could not have had different pronunciations.

Thirdly, even if it is accepted that this difference was of pronunciation between various tribes and as a result they were allowed to read it variously, the verb *unzila* (was revealed) is very inappropriate. The Qur’ān has specified that it was revealed in the language of the Prophet’s tribe: the Quraysh (See for example: 19:97, 44:58). After this, it can be accepted that the various tribes were allowed to read it according to their own accents, but how can this be accepted that the Almighty Himself revealed the various dialects and pronunciations.

Fourthly, it is known that Hishām had accepted Islam on the day Makkah was conquered. If this Hadīth is accepted, it would mean that even after the conquest of Makkah senior Companions and even a close associate like ‘Umar (rta) was unaware of the fact that the Prophet (sws) secretly taught the Qur’ān in some other form and reading from the one openly heard from him and preserved in writing and in memory. Every person can realize how grave this claim is and how far reaching its effects are.

Same is the case of the narratives which record the collection of the Qur’ān in the time of the caliphs Abū Bakr (rta) and ‘Uthmān (rta). The Qur’ān specifies that it was arranged and collected in the time of the Prophet (sws) under the direct guidance of the Almighty, as has been referred to earlier. On the other hand, these narratives present an entirely different picture which is not only against the Qur’ān but also against common sense. In the six canonical books, these narratives are primarily recorded on the authority of Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124 AH). Authorities of *rijāl* regard him to be guilty of *tadlīs* and *idrāj*. Besides these, if some other facets of his personality as referred to by Imām Layth ibn Sa‘d (d. 175 AH) in his

33. Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Kamāl al-Dīn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn Sābiq al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tanwīr al-hawālik ilā al-Mu’atṭā’ Imām Mālik*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-jīl, 1993), 199.

34. The actual words are: *lughāt* and *lahjāt*. There is a difference between the two. In the former the pronunciation of the word changes because of a variation in *harakāt* (eg. بُخْلٌ and بَخْلٌ), while in the latter the pronunciation of a word changes because of a variation in accent. (Translator)

letter to Imām Mālik (d. 179 AH) are kept in consideration, none of the narratives reported by him regarding such important issues as this is acceptable. He writes:

وَكَانَ يَكُونُ مِنْ أَبْنَاءِ شَهَابٍ اخْتِلَافٌ كَثِيرٌ إِذَا لَقَيْنَاهُ، وَإِذَا كَاتَبَهُ بعْضُنَا فَرِّعَمَا كَتَبَ فِي الشَّيْءِ الْوَاحِدِ عَلَى فَضْلِ رأْيِهِ وَعَلَمَهُ بِثَلَاثَةِ أَنْوَاعٍ يَنْقُضُ بَعْضُهَا بَعْضًا، وَلَا يَشْعُرُ بِالَّذِي مُضِيَّ مِنْ رأْيِهِ فِي ذَلِكَ الْأَمْرِ، فَهُوَ الَّذِي يَدْعُونِي إِلَى تَرْكِ مَا أَنْكَرْتُ تَرْكِي إِيَاهُ.

And when we would meet Ibn Shihāb, there would arise a difference of opinion in many issues. When any one of us would ask him in writing about some issue, he, in spite of being so learned, would give three very different answers, each of which would negate the other and he would not even be aware of what he had already said. It is because of this that I have left him – something which you did not like.³⁵

Such is the reality behind these narratives. Consequently, this is an absolute truth that the Qur’ān has one reading only which is found in our codices. Besides this, the readings which are found in commentaries on the Qur’ān or are read and taught in our schools of religious instruction or are even in currency in certain areas are the remnants of those malignant campaigns from which no religious discipline of the Muslims has unfortunately remained protected.

These readings may have arisen from the insistence of some on the reading on which the Qur’ān was revealed before the *al-ardah al-akhīrah* and from the forgetfulness of the narrators but later owing to the same motives which led to the fabrication of Ḥadīth, they became so rampant that at the end of the Umayyid dynasty several of them had come to prominence. It is said that Abū ‘Ubayd Qāsim ibn Sallām (d. 224 AH) selected twenty five of them in his book. The seven readings which are famous in current times were selected by Abū Bakr ibn Mujāhid (d. 324 AH) at the end of the third century *hijrah*. Thus it is generally accepted that their number cannot be ascertained but every reading is Qur’ān which has been reported through a correct chain of narration, is compatible in any way with the *maṣāḥif* prepared by ‘Uthmān (rta) and is correct from any aspect as far as the Arabic language is concerned. Some of these readings are regarded as *mutawātir*; however, a look at their chains of narration which are found in books leaves no doubt that they are *ahād* (isolate), and most of their narrators are suspect in the eyes of the *rijāl* authorities. Consequently, no scholar can even accept them as Ḥadīth, what to speak of the Qur’ān.

(2) Intentionality of the Text

The answer to the second question is that the whole argument on the intentionality of the text is dubious. In all living languages, the meanings denoted by words and expressions are all based on perpetuation (*mutawātirāt*), and are

35. ‘Abbās ibn Muhammad ibn Ḥātim al-Durī, *Tarīkh Yahyā ibn Ma‘īn*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-qalam, n.d.), 375.

certain in all respects. Morphology and linguistics and other similar disciplines speak of this *tawātur*. The veracity or mendacity of the narrators and their number has no significance. Words and expressions which are called *gharīb* and *shādh* (little known) are called so not because their meaning is little known but because they are used sparingly and because they are little known to those who hear or write them. A word is never isolated from its meaning. As long as a word remains in usage, it does so with its meaning. We can be unaware of the meaning of a word and also err in ascertaining it, but this cannot be imagined that it is used without being absolutely certain of the meaning it conveys in all or some periods of time. The understanding when a word is used metaphorically and figuratively or when the same word stands for two different entities or when it is used as a veiled reference or when there exists a general connotation and when a specific one – all are *mutawātir*. This is a common heritage of man in every language of the world. A person may falter in determining whether the word lion has been used literally or figuratively in the sentences “Lion is the king of the forest” and “He is a lion”, however, the collective comprehension of mankind can never err in this regard and in the light of its understanding we can correct a person who makes a mistake in this regard. It is because of this reality of a language that whatever we read and write, we do so with the confidence that people will understand the very meaning that we intended to convey. If for a single instant one comes to know that in documents which are written every day, judgements which are pronounced, rulings that are enacted, announcements and notices delivered and knowledge and disciplines which are communicated, the intentionality of a text is ambiguous, then everything will become meaningless. Thus this view is nothing less than scepticism which has no place in the world of knowledge. Shāh Ismā‘il Shahīd while commenting upon it in his ‘*Abaqāt*’ writes:

لَا يَخْفَى عَلَى مَنْ لِهِ أَدْنَى مَارْسَةً بِأَسَالِيبِ الْكَلَامِ أَنْ هَذَا الْقَوْلُ نَاشٌ عَنْ جَهْلِ مُتَرَكِّمٍ إِذْ وُضِعَ الْإِلْفَاظُ
لِعَانِيهَا مِنَ الْمَوَاتِرَاتِ فَلَا مَدْخَلٌ لِعَصْمَةِ النَّاقِلِينَ فِيهِ

A person who has even the slightest skill of appreciating linguistic styles clearly knows that this view point is based on gross and multiple ignorance because the meaning for which a word stands for is based on perpetuation. Thus the question does not even arise for any discussion on the issue of the infallibility of the narrators.³⁶

(3) Muḥkam and Mutashābih

The answer to the third question is that it is not correct that we cannot with certainty distinguish the *muḥkam* verses of the Qur’ān from the *mutashābih* or that we are unable to determine the meaning of the *mutashābihāt*. All verses of the Qur’ān on which its guidance is based are *muḥkam*, and *mutashābih* are only those verses which mention certain blessings and torments a person may encounter in the

36. Shāh Ismā‘il Shahīd, ‘*Abaqāt*’ (Handwritten Manuscript), Lahore: Punjab University Library, 5.

Hereafter, and these are stated through parables or similes. Similarly, such verses state the attributes and actions of God or mention something which is beyond the grasp of our knowledge and observation like God blowing His spirit into Adam, birth of Jesus (sws) without a father or the various places and circumstances one may encounter in Paradise and Hell. All things for which words have not yet been invented can only be stated through parables and similes. The facts of an unknown world are stated through these very means in the literature of all languages of the world. For example, two hundred years ago, if a person had foreknowledge of electricity bulbs but at that time they had not been invented, he would perhaps have said: Lanterns which would neither require oil nor fire will one day light up the world. The nature of *mutashābih* verses is no different. Neither are they unascertainable nor is there any ambiguity in their meaning. They are set in eloquent Arabic, and we are able to understand their meaning without any difficulty. The only thing is that we are not able to understand what they imply in real life. However, since this lack of understanding has nothing to do with understanding the Qur’ān, a believer should not get after determining what they imply. While explaining this, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

... the reality to which these [*mutashābihāt*] point is itself very clear and obvious. Human intellect can understand that part of it which is essential for it to understand. However, since it belongs to an unseen world, the Qur’ān mentions it through parables and similes so that students of the Qur’ān can understand it as per their capabilities and consider that only God knows what their real form and shape is. These [*mutashābihāt*] relate to attributes and works of God or to the reward and punishment of the Hereafter. We are able to understand them to the extent we need to understand them, and this increases our knowledge and faith but if we go beyond this and start to seek their real form and shape, then this will only lead us astray. The result of this is that while wanting to clear one doubt from the mind, a person ends up gathering many more; so much so, in this quest to know more he loses what he had gained and refutes very clear facts just because he is not able to ascertain their form and shape.³⁷

In the verse of the Qur’ān from which people have deduced the fact that no one can understand the meaning of the *mutashābihāt* verses, the Almighty does not say that no one except Him knows the meaning of the *mutashābihāt* verses; on the contrary, He says that no one knows the form and manifestation of what is conveyed by these verses. The Qur’ānic word used is *tā’wīl* and it is used in the same meaning here as it is in the following verse: وَقَالَ يَا أَبَتَ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَايِّي مِنْ قِبْلٍ (۱۰۰:۱۲) (And [Joseph] said: “Father, this is the meaning of my dream I saw earlier; my Lord has made it a reality,” (12:100)).

Everyone knows the meanings in which this dream is stated in the Qur’ān. Even an ordinary student of this Book understands without any difficulty the

37. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 2, 25-26.

meaning of the verse (12:4) in which this dream is mentioned. However, the true manifestation of the sun, the moon and the eleven stars bowing before Joseph (sws) could only have been ascertained by a person once these words manifested themselves in reality. These are the things which the Qur'ān calls *mutashābih*, and as people contend, they do not mean something which is ambiguous and vague. Thus the *mutashābihāt* in no way undermine the status of the Qur'ān as the *furqān* and the *mīzān*.

The verse under discussion is:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَآخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ
فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ رَيْغُونَ فَيَتَبَعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفُتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ ثَوْبِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ ثَوْبِهِ إِلَّا اللَّهُ
وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلُّ مَنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَدْكُرُ إِلَّا أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ (٧:٣)

It is He who has revealed to you the Book. Some of its verses are *muhkam* – they are the foundation of the Book – and others *mutashābih*.³⁸ Then those whose hearts are warped go after the *mutashābih* among them in order to create dissension and in order to know their reality even though no one except God knows their reality. And those who are well-grounded in knowledge say: “We believe in them: all this has come from our Lord.” And only men of understanding take heed from them. (3:7)

(4) Ḥadīth and the Qur'ān

The answer to the fourth question is that the issue of abrogation or limiting of the Qur'ān by the Ḥadīth has arisen out of a lack of proper understanding and enough deliberation. In reality, no Ḥadīth has abrogated a Qur'ānic verse or limited its scope of application and thus there arises no doubt from this angle on the status of the Qur'ān as the *furqān* and the *mīzān*. When people were not able to understand certain stylistic features of the Qur'ān and the background and perspective of certain verses, they were also not able to understand the words of the Prophet (sws) regarding these areas. All examples which are presented in this regard are of this type. The chain of narrations of some of these narratives have flaws. However, since they are often presented, in the following pages, we shall take up each of these examples disregarding these flaws and present our view on them.

1. Of the animals which God has created on this earth, some are meant to be eaten and others are not. Since these latter type of animals if eaten effect the *tazkiyah* (spiritual purification) of a person, an aversion to them is found in his nature. Generally, human nature provides a person with ample guidance in this

38. The words *muhkam* and *mutashābih* are used as terms in this verse having the meaning alluded. At certain places in the Qur'ān, these words have been used in a different meaning too. For example, the word *muhkam* has been used in 11:1 to connote concise and comprehensive verses, and in 39:23, the word *mutashābih* means verses which are similar to and in harmony with one another.

matter and, without any hesitation, he is able to decide the right course. He very well knows that lions, tigers, elephants, eagles, crows, vultures, kites, snakes, scorpions and human flesh itself are not meant to be eaten. He is also well aware of the fact that horses and mules are a means of transportation and have no role in satisfying one's hunger. That faeces and urine of animals are impure things is known to him very well also. No doubt, at times, human nature becomes perverted but a study of human behaviour shows that a great majority of people does not generally falter in this matter. It is for this reason that the *shari'ah* has not given any original guidance on this matter and after stressing that everything appropriate for eating (*tayyibāt*) is allowed and everything inappropriate for eating (*khabā'ith*) is prohibited, it has left the matter to human nature to decide. Consequently, the *shari'ah* has provided guidance on animals and on things related to animals in which it was difficult for man purely on the basis of his intellect and nature to decide the right course. The pig is a quadruped beast of the same genre as the goat, sheep, cow and cattle; however, it consumes meat like other carnivores. Should it then be considered forbidden or not? Should animals which are slaughtered in a way that all their blood is not drained out be eaten or not? Is the blood of such animals impure as indeed are their faeces and urine? If animals are slaughtered by taking the name of someone other than the Almighty, can they still be eaten? Since man is unable to come up with a decisive answer in these issues, therefore the Almighty guided mankind in this affair through His prophets and informed them that the flesh of the pig, blood, meat of dead animals and animals which are slaughtered in the name of someone other than Allah³⁹ are also impure and unclean and therefore people should abstain from them. In this regard, these aforementioned four things have been primarily discussed by the *shari'ah*. The Qur'ān at some places by using the linguistic expressions قُلْ لَا أَحَدٌ فِي مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ (say: I do not find anything [forbidden] in what [God] has revealed to me), and at some places the word أَنَّمَا (only and only), has unequivocally stated that only and only these four things are prohibited by the Almighty.

It is stated in Sūrah Baqarah:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُّمَا مِنْ طَيَّابَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَآشْكُرُوْا لِلَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ إِيمَانُهُ تَعْبِدُونَ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِتَارِ وَمَا أَهْلَ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ (٢ : ١٧٣ - ١٧٤)

Believers! Eat of the wholesome things with which We have provided you and be grateful to God alone if it is Him you worship. He has forbidden you

39. In the terminology of the Qur'ān, since the reason for prohibition of animals which are slaughtered in the name of someone other than Allah is not the رِجْس (impurity) of the animal itself but the فُسْق (defiance) of the person who slaughters the animal, so if this very فُسْق (defiance) is found in some other form, then it is but logical to regard that form under this category as well. Consequently, the Qur'ān has informed us that slaughtering an animal without invoking the name of Allah or slaughtering it at some shrine as well as meat won in gambling come under it.

only carrion, blood, and the flesh of swine, also any flesh that is slaughtered in the name of someone other than God. (2:172-173)

It is stated in Sūrah An‘ām:

قُلْ لَا أَجِدُ فِي مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَى طَاعَمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَسْفُوْحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خَرْتَرِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رَجْسٌ أَوْ فَسْقًا أَهْلَ لَعْنَةِ اللَّهِ بِهِ (١٤٥:٦)

Say: "I find not in what has been revealed to me through inspiration forbidden to a person who eats things which are edible, unless it be carrion, or blood poured forth or the flesh of swine because all these are unclean or in disobedience to Allah, animals slaughtered in someone else's name." (6:145)

It is reported in certain narratives that the Prophet (sws) has prohibited the meat of beasts having sharp canine teeth, birds having claws and tentacles in their feet, and tamed donkeys.⁴⁰ It is evident from the above discussion that this is merely a delineation of the innate guidance found within human nature. People have erroneously regarded this delineation of divine guidance as *sharī'ah*, even though it has no link with the prohibition of the *sharī'ah* stated in the Qur'ān. Thus the issue of Hadīth abrogating the Qur'ān does not even arise here.

2. One salient feature of the language of the Qur'ān is that the meanings which are understood of their own accord because of the presence of other words and indicators or because of some logical obviousness are not expressed in words. Compliments of oaths, answer to conditional statements, parallel clauses of a sentence and the copulative sentence of a conditional sentence are often suppressed. In 4:11, for example, there is an ellipsis of the word اثنتين (two) before فوْقَ اثنتين (more than two) and that of وَلَأَيْهِ الثلثان (and for the father, two-thirds) after فَلَامَه (and for the mother, one-third) and وَلَأَيْهِ الْأَلْثَلُث (and for the father) after الْكَسْدُس (and for the mother one-sixth) or words of similar meaning. Similarly, an ellipsis of the copulative sentence of وَ أَنْ تَعْدُمُوا لِلْسَّامِي بِالْقَسْطْ (and that you deal with the orphans with justice) has occurred in 4:127. As another example, consider the following verse:

وَمَا مِنْ دَآبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٌ يَطِيرُ بِحَنَاحِيَهٖ إِلَّا أَمَمْ أَمْثَالُكُمْ (٣٨:٦)

And all the beasts that roam in the earth on their feet and all the birds that fly on their wings in the sky with both their wings are but communities like your own. (6:38)

A little deliberation shows that in the above verse an ellipsis of parallel phrases has occurred. Because of the presence of the expression **فِي الْأَرْضِ** (in the earth) in

40. Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim ibn al-Hajjāj al-Nīṣabūrī, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-ṣahīḥ*, 2nd ed. (Riyād: Dār al-salām, 2000), 591, 864, (nos. 3433, 4994); Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-ṣahīḥ*, 716, (no. 4216).

في السَّمَاءِ فِي السَّمَاءِ the first part of the sentence, there is an ellipsis of its parallel expression (in the sky) in the second part. Similarly, because of the presence of the expression بِجَنَاحَيْهِ (fly on their wings) in the second part of the sentence, an ellipsis of its parallel expression تَذُبُّ عَلَى أَرْجُلَهَا (roam on their legs) has occurred in the first part of the sentence. Though this style is not present in the English language, it exists abundantly in classical Arabic. In Sūrah Nisā', where the Qur'ān has mentioned women with whom marriage is prohibited, two instances of this style can be seen. The Qur'ān says:

وَأَمْهَاتُكُمُ الَّتِي أَرْضَعْتُكُمْ وَأَخْوَاتُكُمْ مِنْ الرَّضَاعَةِ (٢٣:٤)

And [marry not] your mothers who have suckled you and your sisters through fosterage. (4:23)

وَأَنْ تَحْمِلُوا بَيْنَ الْأَخْتَيْنِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ (٢٣:٤)

And also two sisters in wedlock at the same time, except for what has already happened. (4:23)

In the first directive, together with foster mothers, foster sisters are also regarded as relations prohibited for marriage. Had the directive ended with foster mothers, nothing further could have been understood from it; however, if the relationship of fosterage with a mother makes her daughter a foster sister, then it is but logical to regard other relations of the foster mother to be also included in this directive. If being suckled through the same mother can make someone a foster sister, why can't the sister of the foster mother be regarded as the maternal aunt, her husband as the father, the sister of her husband as the paternal aunt, her daughter's daughter and her son's daughter as nieces. Hence, it is obvious that all these relations are also prohibited in marriage. This indeed is the purport of the Book of God and the words وَأَخْوَاتُكُمْ مِنْ الرَّضَاعَةِ testify to it. It is evident to any knowledgeable person who deliberates on these words.

Same is the case with the second directive. If combining two sisters in wedlock is a lewd thing as far as the relationship of marriage is concerned, then combining a lady with her brother's daughter in wedlock or with her sister's daughter in wedlock is like combining a mother and a daughter in wedlock. Hence, though the words used are: وَأَنْ تَحْمِلُوا بَيْنَ الْأَخْتَيْنِ, the purport of the Qur'ān no doubt actually is: وَأَنْ تَحْمِلُوا بَيْنَ الْأَخْتَيْنِ وَ بَيْنَ الْمُرْأَةِ وَ عَمْتَهَا وَ بَيْنَ الْمُرْأَةِ وَ خَالَتَهَا (and two sisters in wedlock at the same time and a lady with her brother's daughter at the same time and a lady with her sister's daughter at the same time). However, all these words are suppressed after بَيْنَ الْأَخْتَيْنِ because what is mentioned points towards this suppression as obviously understood. So obvious are the words of this suppression that no student of the Qur'ān can err in understanding them.

The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

يَحْرُمُ مِنْ الرَّضَاعَةِ مَا يَحْرُمُ مِنْ الْوِلَادَةِ

Every relationship which is prohibited [for marriage] owing to lineage is also prohibited owing to fosterage.⁴¹

لَا يُجْمِعُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْأَةِ وَعَمْتَهَا وَلَا بَيْنَ الْمَرْأَةِ وَخَالَتَهَا

Neither can a lady and her paternal aunt nor can a lady and her maternal aunt be combined in wedlock.⁴²

These narratives of the Prophet (sws) only explain the Qur'ānic verses referred to above and in no way alter or add to them.

3. Verses eleven and twelve of Sūrah Nisā' mention the distribution of inheritance of a deceased. While mentioning the shares of various heirs, the Almighty has subtly alluded to the fact that the basis on which a person has the right to inherit from a deceased is his own benefit to him:

آباؤكُمْ وَأَبْناؤكُمْ لَا تَدْرُونَ أَيْهُمْ أَقْرَبُ لَكُمْ نَفْعًا فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْمًا حَكِيمًا (١١:٤)

You know not who among your children and parents are nearest to you in benefit. This is the law of God. Indeed, God is Wise and All-Knowing. (4:11)

This benefit is by nature present in parents, children, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives and other close relations. Hence, in normal circumstances, they will be considered the heirs to the legacy of a deceased. However, in certain unusual circumstances, if an absence of benefit in any of these relationships is diagnosed by sense and reason, then the style and pattern of the verse demands that such a relative should not become an heir to the legacy. This exception, a little deliberation would show, has not been created from some external source; on the contrary, it was present in the directive at its very inception. Hence, if a scholar of the Qur'ān refers to it, he would not be changing or altering the meaning of the Divine book; it would be perfectly in accordance with the purport of the verse, to which its words so clearly testify. In view of this, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said about the Idolaters and the People of the Book of Arabia:

لَا يَرِثُ الْمُسْلِمُ الْكَافِرُ وَلَا الْكَافِرُ الْمُسْلِمُ

A Muslim cannot be an heir to a *kāfir* nor can a *kāfir* be a Muslim's.⁴³

In other words, after the Quraysh and the People of the Book were left with no excuse to deny the truth which had been conclusively communicated to them in its ultimate form, their enmity and hostility became very clear. Consequently, the benefit of kinship between them and the Muslims stood completely severed. Hence, they could not inherit from one another.

41. Mālik, *Al-Mu'atta'*, 395-396, (no. 1887).

42. Mālik, *Al-Mu'atta'*, 341, (no. 1600).

43. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 1167, (no. 6764).

4. In Sūrah Mā’idah (5:33-34), the four punishments prescribed for criminals who spread nuisance and anarchy in the society are *taqtil* (killing someone in an exemplary manner), *taslīb* (crucifixion), amputating limbs from opposite sides and exile. Consequently, the Prophet (sws) in his times included prostitutes in the application of this directive and is reported to have said:

خُذُوا عَنِّي خُذُوا عَنِّي خُذُوا عَنِّي قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا الْبِكْرُ بِالْبِكْرِ حَلْدٌ مِائَةٌ وَتَفْيُ سَنَةٍ
وَالشَّيْبُ بِالشَّيْبِ حَلْدٌ مِائَةٌ وَالرَّجْمُ

Acquire it from me, acquire it from me, acquire it from me. The Almighty has revealed a way for these women. In such criminals, the unmarried men will be treated [in the same way] as the unmarried women and their punishment is a hundred stripes and exile and, similarly, married men and married women shall be treated [in the same way] and their punishment is a hundred stripes and death by stoning.⁴⁴

His view was that since such women were not merely guilty of fornication but were also guilty of spreading anarchy and nuisance in the society as they had adopted profligacy as a way of life, those among them who deserved any mitigation should be administered the punishments of a hundred stripes according to verse two of Sūrah Nūr because of committing fornication and exiled according to verse thirty three of Sūrah Mā’idah to protect the society from their dissolute practices, and those among them who did not deserve any leniency, should be stoned to death according to the directive of *taqtil*⁴⁵ of the same verse of Sūrah Mā’idah.

This directive of the Prophet (sws), it is evident, does not in any way change the purport of the Qur’ān.

5. *Maytah* (meat of dead animals) is one of the things which the Almighty has regarded as forbidden. A person who is conversant with the linguistic features of Arabic knows that this word has a literal meaning and it also has a meaning which emanates from its linguistic usage. In the first case, it means everything which is dead; however, in the second case, one who is aware of the intricacies of the Arabic language will, for example, never include dead fish or dead locust in its connotation. The Prophet (sws), on these very grounds, is reported to have said:

أُحلَتْ لَنَا مِيتَانٌ وَدَمَانٌ الْجَرَادُ وَالْحَيْثَانُ وَالْكَبَدُ وَالظَّهَالُ

“Two [types of] dead and two [forms of] blood are not forbidden for us: The former being fish and locust, and the latter being liver and spleen.”⁴⁶

44. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 749, (no. 4414).

45. A hundred stripes are mentioned in Ahādīth with *rajm* (stoning to death) merely to explain the law. If a person who has been awarded the death penalty is also guilty on other counts, then these punishments are though mentioned in the verdict, are never meted out to him.

46. Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Husayn al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol. 1 (Makkah:

Al-Zamakhsharī, an authority in linguistics, writes:

فَإِنْ قَلْتَ فِي الْمِيَاتِ مَا يَحْلُّ وَهُوَ السَّمْكُ وَالْجَرَادُ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَحْلَتْ لَنَا مِيَاتَانٌ وَدَمَانٌ
قَلْتَ قَصْدَ مَا يَتَفَاهَمُهُ النَّاسُ وَيَنْعَارِفُونَهُ فِي الْعَادَةِ 'أَلَا تَرَى أَنَّ الْقَائِلَ إِذَا قَالَ : أَكْلَ فَلَانَ مِيَةً لَمْ يَسْبِقْ
الْوَهْمَ إِلَى السَّمْكِ وَالْجَرَادِ كَمَا لَوْ قَالَ : أَكْلَ دَمًا لَمْ يَسْبِقْ إِلَى الْكَبِيدِ وَالظَّحَالِ' وَلِاعْتِبَارِ الْعَادَةِ
وَالْتَّعَارِفِ قَالُوا : مِنْ حَلْفٍ لَا يَأْكُلُ لَحْمًا فَأَكْلَ سَمْكًا لَمْ يَحْنَثْ وَانْ أَكْلَ لَحْمًا فِي الْحَقِيقَةِ

Then if you ask the question: “Among the dead, there are some things which are allowed to us like the fish and locust and the Prophet (sws) has said: ‘two [types of] dead and two [forms of] blood are allowed to us,’” I will say in response: “The word *ميته* (*maytah*) mentioned in the Qur’ān must be understood according to its linguistic usage. Is not the case that when someone says that he has eaten *maytah*, we never include a fish or a locust in its connotation. This is similar to the fact that if a person says that he has drunk blood we never include liver or spleen in its connotation. Precisely because of such usage, jurists say that if a person swears that he will never eat meat and then he consumes fish, this will not break his oath although in reality he has eaten meat.”⁴⁷

6. The punishment for theft is mentioned in the Qur’ān in the following words:

وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطُعُوا أَيْدِيهِمَا حَرَاءً بِمَا كَسَبُوكُمْ لَكُلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٣٨: ٥)

And as to the thief, male or female, cut off their hands as a reward of their own deeds, and as an exemplary punishment from God. For God is Mighty and Wise. (5:38)

It is evident from this verse that the punishment of amputating the hands is prescribed for a thief, both male (*sāriq*) or female (*sāriqah*). Every scholar of the Arabic language knows that the words *sāriq* and *sāriqah* are adjectives and denote thoroughness and completeness in the characteristics of the verb they qualify. Consequently, they can only be used for the type of *sarqah* which can be called a theft and the one who commits it can be called a thief. In other words, if a child steals a few rupees from his father’s pocket, or a wife pinches some money from her husband, or if a person steals something very ordinary, or plucks some fruit from his neighbour’s orchard, or carries away something valuable which has been

Maktabah dār al-Bāz, 1994), 254, (no. 1128). In the opinion of the scholars of Hadīth, the chain of narration of this narrative is *mawqūf*. Similarly, the narrative regarding theft cited in point no. 6 is *mursal*. However, one narrative which discusses this topic is *ḥasan*. See: Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ahmād ibn Shu‘ayb al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 1st ed. (Riyāḍ: Dār al-salām, 1999), 680, (no. 4960).

47. Abū al-Qāsim Muhammād ibn ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf ‘an haqā’iq al-tanzīl wa ‘uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta’wīl*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-kitāb al-‘arabī, n.d.), 215.

left unprotected, or drives away an unattended grazing animal, or commits this ignoble offence owing to some need or compulsion, then, no doubt all these are unworthy acts and should be punished, but, certainly, they cannot be classified as acts of theft which the above given verse qualifies.

The narrative of the Prophet (sws) which is generally presented in this regard is only an explanation of this purport of the Qur’ān and does not modify it in the slightest way:

لَا قَطْعٌ فِي ثَمَرٍ مُّعْلَقٍ وَلَا فِي حَرَيْسَةٍ جَبَلٍ فَإِذَا آوَاهُ الْمُرَاحُ أَوْ الْجَرَينُ فَالْقَطْعُ فِيمَا يَلْعُثُ ثَمَنَ الْمَحْنَ

If a fruit is hanging from a tree or a goat is grazing on a mountain side and someone steals them, then hands should not be amputated for this. But if the goat comes in a pen-fold and the fruit is stacked in a field, then hands should be amputated on the condition that the fruit or the goat are at least the price of a shield.⁴⁸

v. Parallel Verses and Constructions

The Qur’ān presents its message in various ways and in a variety of styles. As a result, it has become unparalleled among other works in explaining its own verses which are set in a very concise diction and which are inimitable. Thus it introduces itself as: كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا :

اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانِي (٢٣:٣٩)

God has revealed the best of discourses whose verses resemble one another and whose *sūrahs* occur in pairs. (39:23)

Verses such as ٤١:١٧ وَلَقَدْ صَرَفْنَا فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ لِيَذَكُّرُوا bring to light this very characteristic of the Qur’ān by the word *taṣrīf*. This word literally means “to circulate and pass around” ie presenting the same thing in various ways and in diverse styles:

كِتَابٌ أَحْكَمَتْ آيَاتُهُ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ خَبِيرٍ (١١:١)

This is a Book, whose verses were first concise and then they were explained from Him who is wise and all-knowing. (11:1)

Thus, initially, the style adopted was concise, brief and succinct, and later these succinct verses which carried a world of meaning were explained. While explaining this characteristic of the Qur’ān, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

... if you read the Qur’ān, you realize that the same topic appears in various

48. Mālik, *Al-Mu’attā*, 545, (no. 2594).

49. “And we have explained in various ways Our revelations in this Qur’ān so that they may take heed.” (17:41)

sūrahs. A novice may regard this as mere repetition; however, those who deliberate on the Qur’ān know that it does not contain any repetition. A topic which appears at other places also, does not appear with the same background and context. These are different at different places. The variations depend on the place and placement of the topic under discussion. At one place, an aspect would be hidden, while at another it would be revealed. Similarly, at one place, the real direction of address may be unspecified, and at another context, it becomes specified. In fact, my years of personal experience is that at one place a word appears to be unclear and at another place, its meaning becomes very clear. Similarly, at one place, the argument of some premise may not be understood; however, at another place, it becomes as clear as the sun. This style adopted by the Qur’ān is to imprint its message on the reader. Consequently, it is to express gratitude to the Almighty that I mention the fact that in order to overcome the difficulties of the Qur’ān the extent of help I have received from the Qur’ān itself is emulated by no other source. The beauty of the Qur’ānic message itself entails that it should be read in various styles. If a person has a keen mind, the exquisite variations in presenting the same fact help him in absorbing it in some way or the other.⁵⁰

These are the words and first hand experience of the greatest scholar of the Qur’ān in contemporary times after the great Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāḥī. Any student of the Qur’ān who deliberates on the Qur’ān will find this reality stamped on every page of it. Thus, it must be accepted as a principle that the Qur’ān explains itself (الْقُرْآنُ يُفَسِّرُ بَعْضُهُ بَعْضًا). This principle holds good not only for the directives of the Qur’ān, the historical references it cites and other allusions it makes but also for the invaluable treasure of the parallels of its own words and styles so that difficulties encountered in understanding them can be resolved by recourse to this treasure. Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī writes:

It is not possible to present the details here otherwise I could have shown how the Qur’ān takes a word from the common spoken Arabic language and incorporates loftier meanings in it than its conventionally understood one. Not only this, the variation in which it would use this word and the aura it would create for it would be enough to fully guide and satisfy a student of the Qur’ān about its usage and other minute details without making him to resort to elaborate Arabic lexicons like the *Lisān* and the *Sīḥāh*. This characteristic of the Qur’ān can be observed not only in words, but also with the styles it adopts and the grammatical constructions it contains. The constructions which have become very difficult for the grammarians of the Qur’ān to comprehend have been explained and corroborated by the Qur’ān at other places by variation in usage to the extent that one becomes fully certain of their implications.⁵¹

50. Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 1, 28.

51. Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī, *Mabādī Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, 60.

vi. The Final Book on Religion

The Qur'ān is last and final and not the first Book of the religion it presents. The history of this religion is that when God created man on this earth, the basic realities of religion were ingrained in man's nature. He was then communicated the following things through his earliest ancestor, Adam (sws):

Firstly, he has a Creator who created him; He alone is his Lord, and as a natural corollary to this, He alone should be worshipped by him.

Secondly, he has been sent in this world to be tried and tested, and, for this, he has been given a clear awareness of good and evil; he has not only been given the freedom to exercise his will, he has also been given sovereignty on this earth. This trial of his will continue till his death. If he is successful in this trial, he will be given the Kingdom of Heaven where he will be free from the regrets of the past and the fears of the future.

Thirdly, the Almighty, at various times, will keep sending His guidance according to man's needs. If he obeys this guidance, he will not go astray, and if he evades it, he will be eternally doomed in the Hereafter.

Consequently, the Almighty fulfilled His promise and provided guidance to mankind by selecting people from among them and through them delivered His guidance to mankind. This guidance contained both *al-hikmah* and *al-sharī'ah*. The former obviously did not require any change, while the latter was revealed as per the needs of a people until the time of Abraham (sws) when its directives crystallized in the form of a *sunnah* for all mankind. In the time of Moses (sws), when a formal state of the Israelites had been established, the Torah was revealed and directives of the *sharī'ah* regarding the collectivity were also revealed. During this time, when certain aspects of *hikmah* did not remain before the eyes of people, they were made evident to them through the Psalms and Gospels. When the original texts of these scriptures became extinct, the Almighty sent the last of His Messengers and gave him the Qur'ān:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهِمِّمًا عَلَيْهِ فَاحْكُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمَنْهَا جَاءَ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكُنْ لَّيْلَوْكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيَنْبَثِثُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ (٤٨:٥)

And [O Prophet!] We have revealed to you the Book with the truth in confirmation of the *sharī'ah* before it, and standing as a guardian over it. Therefore give judgement among these [People of the Book] according to the guidance revealed by God and do not yield to their whims by swerving from the truth revealed to you. For each of you, We have ordained a *sharī'ah* and assigned a path, and had God pleased, He could have made of you one community: but it is His wish to try you by that which He has bestowed upon you. So, compete with each other in good deeds. To God shall you all return.

Then He shall disclose upon you all your differences. (5:48)

This is the history of religion. Consequently, keeping it in consideration, the following precede the Qur'ān:

- i. Innate Guidance found in human nature
- ii. The Tradition of the Religion of Abraham (sws)
- iii. The Scriptures of the Prophets

The first of the above mentioned things relates to the basics of faith and morality. In the terminology of the Qur'ān, a major portion of this is called *ma'rūf* and *munkar*. The former refers to things which are regarded to be good by human nature and the latter refers to things which are regarded to be evil by it and which are abhorred by it. The Qur'ān does not give a comprehensive list of these things; on other hand, it says that a person is innately aware of these and is able to fully distinguish the two on this basis. It thus demands that a person accept *ma'rūf* and shun *munkar*:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أُولَئِكَ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَايُونَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ (٧١:٩)

And true believers, both men and women, are friends to one another. They urge one another to what is good and forbid what is evil. (9:71)

The second of the above mentioned things is called *millat-iibrāhīmī*. by the Qur'ān. The prayer, the fast, the *hajj* and the *zakāh* are all directives of this *millat-iibrāhīmī*. The addressees of the Qur'ān were fully aware of them and to a great extent practiced them the way they were. In the narrative which depicts Abū Dharr's (rta) acceptance of faith, he explicitly says that he would diligently offer the prayer even before Muḥammad (sws) had declared his prophethood.⁵² It is known that the Friday prayer was not unknown to the addressees of the Qur'ān.⁵³ They would offer the funeral prayer⁵⁴ and would fast in the very manner we would fast today.⁵⁵ *Zakāh* too was known to them as a specific share in their wealth the way it is now.⁵⁶ Regarding the worship rituals of *hajj* and '*umrah*, every knowledgeable person knows that though the Quraysh had added some religious innovations to them, the rites of these worship rituals which they offered were virtually the same as they are today. In fact, it is evident from certain narratives that people were even aware of these innovations. Consequently, there is a narrative both by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim that the *hajj* offered by Muḥammad (sws) before

52. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 1086-1088, (no. 6359).

53. Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, vol. 8 (Beirut: Dār ṣādir, n.d), 58.

54. Jawwād ‘Alī, *Al-Muṭaṣṣal fī tārīkh al-‘arab qabl al-islām*, 2nd ed., vol. 6 (Beirut: Dār al-‘ilm li al-malāyīn, 1986), 338.

55. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 321, (no. 2002); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 460, (no. 2641).

56. The Qur'ān, 70:24.

his prophethood was offered without these innovations of the Quraysh in the very manner it was offered ever since the time of Abraham (sws).⁵⁷

Same is the case with animal sacrifice, *i'tikāf*, circumcision besides some other customs and etiquette of Islam. All these things were already known and specified and the Arabs were aware of them as age old traditions transferred by one generation to another. Thus there was no need for the Qur'ān to give their details. They fully knew what the Arabic words which referred to them meant. If the Qur'ān asked them to pray and to fast and to offer the *hajj* and to pay *zakāh*, they fully knew what these terms meant. The Qur'ān never gave them the first directive about these. It only reformed and revived them and explained some aspect – and that too to the extent of what was essential. This tradition of the religion of Abraham (sws), which in religious parlance is called Sunnah, is regarded by the Qur'ān as the religion of God, and when it asks the Prophet (sws) to follow the religion of Abraham (sws), it indeed asks him to fully follow this Sunnah as well:

ثُمَّ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ أَنِ اتَّبِعْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١٢٣:١٦)

Then We revealed to you to follow the ways of Abraham, who was true in faith and was not among the polytheists. (16:123)

The third of these are the divine scriptures which are present in the Bible in the form of the Torah, the Gospels and the Psalms. Their recipients have lost parts of them to posterity and have also been guilty of interpolations in them. However, still a rich treasure of the *shari'ah* and *hikmah* revealed by the Almighty is present in them in its vintage divine style. Students of the Qur'ān know that it has referred to them at various places, has made concise allusions to the prophetic tales mentioned in them and has negated the interpolations of the Jews and the Christians and criticized the history presented in them. The Qur'ān has based its *itmām al-hujjah* (communicating the truth to the extent that nobody has an excuse to deny it) on these very scriptures and it unequivocally declares that its fountainhead and origin is the same as that of these scriptures:

نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقاً لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَأَنْزَلَ التَّوْرَاهَ وَالإِنجِيلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ هُدًى لِلنَّاسِ
وَأَنْزَلَ الْفُرْqَانَ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انتقامٍ (٣:٤-٣)

[O Prophet!] He has revealed to you the Book with the truth, in confirmation of the scriptures which preceded it; and before this He has already revealed the Torah and the Gospel for the guidance of mankind, and [after them] revealed this *furqān*. Indeed, those that deny God's revelations shall be sternly punished, and God is Mighty and Capable of Retribution. (3:3-4)

إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّنَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ

57. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-sahīh*, 270, (no. 1664); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-sahīh*, 517, (no. 2956).

وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَعِيسَى وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زُبُورًا (١٦٣:٤)

O Prophet (sws)! We have sent revelations to you as We sent revelations to Noah and to the prophets who came after him, and as We sent revelations to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and his progeny and to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, Solomon, and We gave the Psalms to David. (4:163)

It is because of this background of the Qur'ān that certain principles should be accepted in interpreting it.

Firstly, this religion stands completed with the awareness of good and evil which is found in human nature and which the Qur'ān calls *ma'rūf* (good) and *munkar* (evil). This *ma'rūf* and *munkar* precede the directives and prohibitions of the *sharī'ah* which are prescribed in the Qur'ān, and are the foundations on which the latter stand. Any concept of the *sharī'ah* which is devoid of the good and evil found in human nature will definitely be defective and against the purport of the Qur'ān.

Secondly, the Sunnah is not after the Qur'ān; it precedes it historically. Hence it shall necessarily be derived from the consensus and perpetual adherence of its adherents. The details of its directives mentioned in the Qur'ān shall also be ascertained from this very consensus and perpetual adherence. They shall not be derived from the Qur'ān the way some scholars of contemporary times have done so, and in this manner grossly misinterpreted the Qur'ān.

Thirdly, in order to understand styles peculiar to divine literature, the history of the Jews and the Christians and accounts of the Israelite prophets and the allusions of the Qur'ān to other similar topics as well as the details of facts it briefly refers to, the real source are the previous scriptures. They shall be regarded as the basis of debate and discussion. In this regard, the narratives which have been recorded in various exegeses of the Qur'ān and which are mostly based on hearsay shall be disregarded. These narratives cannot be a substitute to the light which ancient scriptures cast on these subjects and the way the words of the Qur'ān accept these details or bring to surface the real facts about certain aspects mentioned in them. Such narratives neither satisfy the intellect of the students of the Qur'ān nor prove of any worth as an argument for the People of the Book.

vii. Subject-Matter of the Qur'ān

The subject matter of the Qur'ān is Muhāmmad's *indhār*. Every page of the Qur'ān speaks of this reality. The reason for this is that the Qur'ān has not merely been revealed as an amalgam of *sharī'ah* and *hikmah*, it has also been revealed to become the real means of the Prophet's *indhār* to his people:

وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنذِرَكُمْ بِهِ وَمَنْ يَلْعَمْ (٦:٦)

And this Qur'ān has been revealed to me that I may warn you through it and all whom it may reach. (6:19)

It is known that Muḥammad (sws) was not merely a *nabī* (prophet), he was also a *rasūl* (messenger). Prophets are personalities whom the Almighty reveals divine guidance so that they can guide people. However, not every prophet is a messenger. Messengerhood is a position bestowed to only some prophets. According to its details furnished by the Qur’ān, a *rasūl* decides the fate of his addressees and implements the judgement of God on them in this very world. The Qur’ān informs us that this final phase in the preaching endeavour of a *rasūl* comes after it passes through the phases of *indhār*,⁵⁸ *indhār-i ‘ām*,⁵⁹ *itmām al-hujjah*⁶⁰ and *hijrah wa barā’ah*.⁶¹ It is in this phase that the divine court of justice is set up on this earth. Punishment is meted out to the rejecters of the truth and those who have accepted it are rewarded, and, in this way, a miniature Day of Judgement is witnessed on the face of the earth. The history of the preaching endeavours of the *rusul* related in the Qur’ān shows that at this stage generally either of the following two situations arise.

Firstly, a *rasūl* has a few companions only and there is no place available to him for migration.

Secondly, a *rasūl*'s companions are in substantial numbers and the Almighty also furnishes a place to them where they can migrate and be bestowed with political authority.

In both these situations, the established practice of the Almighty manifests itself – the practice which the Qur’ān refers to in the following words:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَادِثُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ فِي الْأَذْلَى كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلَبِينَ أَنَا وَرَسُولِي إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَوِي عَزِيزٌ (٥٨ : ٢١ - ٢٠)

Indeed those who are opposing Allah and His Messenger are bound to be humiliated. The Almighty has ordained: “I and My messengers shall always prevail.” Indeed, Allah is Mighty and Powerful. (58:20-21)

In the first situation, once a *rasūl* has left his people, divine punishment in the form of raging storms, cyclones and other calamities descends upon those who have rejected him and completely destroys them. It is evident from the Qur’ān that the people of Noah (sws), Lot (sws), Sālih (sws) and Shu‘ayb (sws) besides others met with this dreadful fate. The only exception in this case were the Israelites. Since they primarily adhered to monotheism, instead of annihilation, the punishment of subjugation was meted out to them once the Prophet Jesus (sws) left them.

In the second situation, a *rasūl* and his companions subdue their nation by force. In this case, the addressees of the *rasūl* are given some more respite for he

58. Warning.

59. Augmented and pronounced warning.

60. Communicating the truth to the extent that no one among its addressees is left with an excuse to deny it.

61. Migration and acquittal.

delivers the truth to the people of the place he has migrated to till the extent that they too are left with no excuse to deny it. Also, during this time he instructs and purifies his followers and isolates them from his rejecters and organizes them to fight the enemy. He also consolidates his political authority in the place he has migrated to the extent that with its help he is able to destroy his rejecters and achieve victory for his followers.

In the case of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws), this second situation arose. Consequently, the subject matter of the Qur’ān is the account of his *indhār* which passed through various phases referred to above and culminated in the worldly reward and retribution of his addressees. Each of its *sūrahs* has been revealed in this background, and each of its groups have been arranged keeping it in view.

While taking into consideration this subject matter of the Qur’ān, the following three things should thus always remain in consideration before a student of the Qur’ān viz-a-viz its exegesis and interpretation:

Firstly, after deliberation on the contents of a *sūrah*, the exact phase in which it was revealed should be determined. So deep and accurate is a person required to go in this endeavour that he is able to very satisfactorily say that for example a *sūrah* has been revealed in the phase of *indhār* or in the phase of migration and acquittal or in the phase of reward and punishment. Each verse of a *sūrah* also should be interpreted keeping in view this distinction.

Secondly, the addressees of each *sūrah* must be determined from among people present at the time of revelation of the Qur’ān. They could be the Idolaters, the People of the Book, the Hypocrites, the Prophet (sws) and his followers or some specific group from among these denominations. It must also be determined if parts of a *sūrah* address a secondary addressee besides the primary one. Consequently, the antecedent of every pronoun, the referred to entity of every defining article (*alif lām*) and the connotation of every term and expression should be determined in the light of the addressees of the *sūrah*.

Thirdly, it must be determined specially in case of directives which relate to *jihād*, supremacy of the truth and political authority as a result of this supremacy whether they are a permanent directive of *sharī‘ah* or if they specifically relate to the addressees of the prophetic times and the directive cannot be extended beyond these addressees.

viii. Coherence in the Discourse

Each *sūrah* is a coherent collection of verses. These verses are not disjointed and haphazardly placed in a *sūrah*. In fact, each *sūrah* has a theme and all the verses are aptly placed with regard to this theme. When a *sūrah* is studied while keeping in consideration its theme and when its coherence becomes evident as a result of this study, it comes out as a well-knit unit. What is the value of this coherence? While answering this question, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī writes:

It is absolutely incorrect to think that *nazm* (coherence) is merely a subtle thing which has no importance as regards the real objective of Islam. In my consideration, its real worth stems from the fact that it is the door through

which the real knowledge and wisdom of the Qur'ān can be reached. A person who reads the Qur'ān without the guidance of *nazm* will at best be able to understand some independent and solitary directives.

Although the knowledge of independent and solitary directives is also valuable, however there is a world of difference in having knowledge of the effects of certain plants and herbs from a dictionary of medical terms and in the fact that an adept doctor prepares a prescription from all these ingredients which totally cures the patient. The brick and fabric of the Tāj Mahal would have been used in many different buildings of the world; however, in spite of this, there is only one Tāj Mahal. Without any real comparison, I would say that the words and sentences of the Qur'ān all belong to the Arabic language; however, the unparalleled arrangement of the Qur'ān has bestowed on them the ambience and beauty which nothing on this earth can rival.

Just as families have genealogies, pious and evil deeds too have genealogies. Sometimes we regard a pious deed to be an ordinary one, whereas it actually belongs to the family of pious deeds from which the branches of great pious deeds originate. Similarly, sometimes we regard an evil deed to be ordinary, whereas it belongs to that family of evil deeds from which originate the deadliest of diseases. A person who wants to understand the wisdom of religion should be aware of all these steps and stages of pious and evil deeds otherwise there is a strong chance that he would end up considering a disease which is a harbinger to tuberculosis as the one which foretells of influenza and vice versa. This wisdom of the Qur'ān is not evident from isolated parts of its discourse but from its coherence and arrangement. If a person is aware of the individual verses of a *sūrah*, but is not aware of the meaningful coherence that exists between these verses, then he will never be able to have access to this wisdom.

Similarly, the Qur'ān has furnished historical arguments as well as the ones found in human nature and in the external world in order to substantiate some principle premise. When a person who is aware of this arrangement deliberates on a *sūrah*, he will feel that he has read a very comprehensive, well-reasoned and satisfying discourse on the topic under discussion. On the other hand, a person who is not aware of this arrangement may have an idea of the contents of the discourse but will be deprived of the wisdom found in the *sūrah*.⁶²

After that, he has explained the importance of Qur'ānic coherence with reference to the collective and political unity of the Muslims:

Every person knows that it is the strong rope of the Qur'ān that holds together the fabric of this *ummah*, and all Muslims have been directed to

62. Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 20-21.

hold steadfast to this rope and not divide themselves into factions. An obvious requirement of this directive is that we must turn to the Qur'ān to resolve all differences which arise among us; however, it is very unfortunate that all of us have different opinions regarding the Qur'ān. There are so many views in the interpretation of every verse, and most of these views are contradictory to one another and we do not have any reference point to decide which view is the correct one. If a difference of opinion arises in the interpretation of a discourse, the most satisfactory thing which can resolve this is the context and coherence of the discourse. Unfortunately, most people do not regard the Qur'ān to be a coherent book having a definite context. The result is that differences of opinions have become permanent. A lot of differences of opinion which have arisen in *fiqh* are because of disregarding the context of a verse. If this context is kept in consideration, one will find that on most occasions only one interpretation is possible.

More critical than the issue of juristic differences is the case of misguided sects. Most of these sects have lent credence to their beliefs through various verses of the Qur'ān. They normally sever a verse from its context and then interpret it the way they want to. Obviously, once a sentence is severed from its context, one can attribute multiple meanings to it if one wants to. Some of these meanings could never have even been imagined by the author. But for the fear of consuming a lot of space, I could have given several examples of verses which have been misinterpreted owing to this approach and have wrecked havoc with the actual meaning they imply. However, no one seems to be bothered to just look up the context and placement of the verse. He does not give any importance to these aspects if the Qur'ān is being deliberated upon.⁶³

It is evident from the foregoing discussion that what makes the Qur'ān a document having one definite meaning and which resolves all differences of interpretation and thus verifies Imām al-Farāhī's words *الْقُرْآنُ لَا يَحْتَمِلُ إِلَّا تَوْلِيْدًا وَاحِدًا*⁶⁴ about it is the coherence it possesses. Imām Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī writes:

In my exegesis, I have tried to determine a single interpretation of each Qur'ānic verse because I have given full importance to the context and coherence in the verses. In fact, the truth of the matter is that I have been forced into this because the context and coherence in the verses have not allowed me to swerve from this. The right interpretation becomes so clear and obvious, and if a person is not deeply prejudiced, he can give his life but he cannot bear to deviate from it.⁶⁵

63. Ibid.

64. "There is no possibility of more than one interpretation in the Qur'ān." See: Al-Farāhī, *Rasā'il fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 230.

65. Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 22.

It is because of this coherence in the Qur'ān that when it called upon its addressees to emulate it, it did not ask them to produce independent verses but to produce one or more *sūrabs* like it:

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَرَأَنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدَنَا فَأَثُورُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّنْ مُّثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٢٣: ٢)

And if you are in doubt about what We have revealed to Our servant, then [go and] produce a single *sūrah* like it. And [for this purpose] also call your leaders besides Allah, if you are truthful [in your claim]. (2:23)

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأَثُورُوا بِعَشْرِ سُورٍ مُّثْلِهِ مُفْتَرَيَاتٍ وَادْعُوا مَنْ أَسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
صَادِقِينَ (١٣: ١١)

Do they say: "He has forged it himself"; Tell them: "Produce ten invented *sūrabs* like it and call on whom you can except God if you are truthful." (11:13)

The way the exponents of the Farāhī school of thought have revealed the coherence in the Qur'ān does not require any further discussion to prove that it does exist; however, what is the nature of this coherence? The following points will help in understanding it:

1. Each *sūrah* has a theme round which its contents revolve and make it into a unified whole. It is the most comprehensive statement of its contents and what the soul is to a body, the theme is to a *sūrah*.
2. Together with the main text of a *sūrah*, there is an introduction and a conclusion. The content of a *sūrah* in some cases can be divided into sections and paragraphs, and in other cases only in paragraphs. Paragraphs depict small shifts in the subject and sections depict greater shifts in it. The verses of the introduction and of the conclusion also may at times be divided into paragraphs as per the subject they discuss.
3. These paragraphs and these sections relate to each other not through a verse to verse linear connection but through various literary devices like parables, comparison or parallelism as well as through statements and passages which are conditional, parenthetical, inferential, modifying, cyclic or which signify corollaries, conclusions, questions or answers. This of course is not an exhaustive list.
4. The text of a *sūrah* progresses through these paragraphs and sections and gradually reaches its culmination. As a result, the *sūrah* assumes a distinct and unique form and shape, and becomes a complete and independent whole.

ix. Arrangement of the Qur'ān

The *sūrabs* of the Qur'ān are not haphazardly compiled as is generally thought. They have been arranged in a specific order by the Almighty, and like the

arrangement of the verses within a *sūrah*, the arrangement of the *sūrahs* within the Qur’ān is very apt and meaningful with relation to the topic they discuss. In a nutshell, as per this arrangement, the Qur’ān is divided in seven distinct groups and the *sūrahs* within each group occur in pairs. This pairing of the *sūrahs* is on the basis of the topics discussed, and each member of a pair has a complimentary relation with one another. Some *sūrahs* are an exception to this scheme like Sūrah Fātiḥah, which is like an introduction to the whole Qur’ān. Some other *sūrahs* have come as a supplement or as a conclusion of a group. This scheme, with its seven *sūrah*-groups and pairing of the *sūrahs*, is stated by the Qur’ān in the following words:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنْ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ (١٥ : ٨٧)

And [O Prophet!] We have bestowed upon you seven *mathānī*⁶⁶ which is this great Qur’ān. (15:87)⁶⁷

Each group of the Qur’ān begins with one or more Makkan *sūrah* and ends with one or more Madīnan *sūrah*.

Following is a brief description of the seven Qur’ānic groups:

Group I {Sūrah Fātiḥah (1) - Sūrah Mā’idah (5)}

Makkan: 1

Madīnan: 2-5

Group II {Sūrah An’ām (6) - Sūrah Tawbah (9)}

Makkan: 6, 7

Madīnan: 8, 9

Group III {Sūrah Yūnus (10) - Sūrah Nūr (24)}

Makkan: 10-23

Madīnan: 24

Group IV {Sūrah Furqān (25) - Sūrah Ahzāb (33)}

Makkan: 25-32

Madīnan: 33

Group V {Sūrah Sabā (34) - Sūrah Hujurāt (49)}

Makkan: 34-46

Madīnan: 47-49

Group VI {Sūrah Qāf (50) - Sūrah Tahrīm (66)}

66. *Mathānī* (مثاني) is the plural of *mathnā* (مثنى) and it means something which occurs in pairs.

67. For an explanation of this verse, see: Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 4, 377-378.

Makkan: 50-56

Madīnan: 57-66

Group VII {Sūrah Mulk (67) - Sūrah Nās (114)}

Makkan: 67-112

Madīnan : 113-14

Each group has a theme, and the *sūrahs* within it are arranged according to this theme.

The theme of the first group is to communicate the truth to the Jews and Christians to the extent that they are left with no excuse to deny it, to institute a new *ummah* from among the Ishmaelites, its spiritual purification and isolation from the disbelievers and a description of its final covenant with the Almighty.

The theme of the second group is to communicate the truth to the polytheists of Arabia to the extent that they are left with no excuse to deny it, spiritual purification of the believers and their isolation from the disbelievers and a description of the final worldly Judgement of God.

The third, fourth, fifth and sixth groups have the same theme: delivering warning and glad tidings and spiritual purification of the believers and their isolation from the disbelievers.

The theme of the seventh group is to warn the leadership of the Quraysh of the consequences of the Hereafter, to communicate the truth to them to the extent that they are left with no excuse to deny it, and, as a result, to warn them of a severe punishment, and to give glad tidings to Muḥammad (sws) of the dominance of his religion in the Arabian peninsula. Briefly, this can be stated as delivering warning and glad tidings.

If the first group is not taken into consideration, the sequence of the groups is from the end to the beginning (the seventh to the second group). Consequently, the seventh group ends on delivering warning and glad tidings. After that, in the sixth, fifth, fourth and third groups besides the theme of delivering warning and glad tidings, the theme of spiritual purification of the believers and their isolation from the disbelievers is also added. The second group is the culmination of the groups. It is here that the *indhār* of Muḥammad (sws) reaches its culmination too. Thus besides the themes of delivering warning and glad tidings, and the spiritual purification of the believers and their isolation from the disbelievers, the worldly Judgement of God is also depicted which is actually a miniature Day of Judgement.

The first group specifically addresses the People of the Book instead of the polytheists of Arabia and in this respect differs from the rest. However, it too relates to the worldly judgement pronounced in the second group in Sūrah Tawbah in the very manner the rest of the groups relate to it. Thus the second group is the culmination of all the groups. The topic of *indhār* after passing through various phases reaches its peak of worldly judgement in this group from both sides. The only difference are the addressees.

It is evident from this that from the seventh to the second group an ascending

order arrangement is present in order to relate it with the first group in this manner.

The first group has been placed the foremost because the recipients of the Qur'ān are its addresses the foremost.

Except for the first group, the Makkan *sūrahs* of each group discuss delivering of warning and glad tidings and of communicating the truth to the addresses to the extent that they do not have any excuse to deny it, while the Madīnan *sūrahs* discuss the spiritual purification and isolation of the believers. However, both the Makkan and Madīnan *sūrahs* are in harmony and consonance with one another in each group and relate to one another in a manner a root and stem are related to the branches.

This then is the arrangement of the Qur'ān. If it is deliberated upon at length the extent of guidance it provides to a student of the Qur'ān in understanding the background of the *sūrahs* and their time of revelation and the addressees of the Qur'ān as well in determining the topic of a *sūrah* and its purport cannot be obtained whatsoever from any thing external to the Qur'ān.

x. Historical Background

The Qur'ān must be understood in the background in which it was revealed. According to established history, it was revealed to Muhammad (sws) in the seventh century in Arabia. It is evident from this history that Muhammad (sws) explained the Qur'ān wherever and whenever a need arose, and so did the scholars among his Companions (rta) and the scholars and researchers after them. This history of the Qur'ān is an established fact and demands the following from its students:

Firstly, he must be well aware of the history of the period and place in which the Qur'ān was revealed. Every student of the Qur'ān knows that it mentions the destruction of previous Arab nations like the 'Ād, the Thamūd and the people of Madyan. The views held by these peoples are alluded to by the Qur'ān. It also mentions the preaching of their respective prophets and the way these people reacted to it. Also depicted in the Qur'ān is the arrival of Abraham (sws) into Arabia, the sacrifice of his son Ishmael (sws) and the construction of the Baytullāh. The Qur'ān also refers to the influence of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) on the cultural, moral, social and economic conditions of Arabia. Also portrayed in the Qur'ān are the alterations done by the Quraysh in the religion constituted by Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) and the way they transformed the Baytullāh, the centre of monotheism into a centre of idol-worship and the religious innovations and rituals which as a result of this made way into their religion. Similarly, discussed in the Qur'ān are the circumstances in which the Qur'ān was revealed, the incidents which took place at that time, as well as the political and religious views which were in vogue at that time. In order to understand all this, it is essential that the available history of that period be fully benefited from while keeping it subservient to the words of the Qur'ān and its coherence. Through this, many aspects which the Qur'ān refers to can be understood better, and it is also helpful in unfolding many complexities of the Qur'ān.

Secondly, full importance should be given to whatever is mentioned in Ahādīth and Āthār literature with reference to the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta). No doubt they contain many spurious things, and since the original words have not always been preserved and a narrator has relied on his own intellect to transmit these words, a lot of changes have come about in the original words, yet this literature still contains many valuable gems. While pointing out the correct attitude in this regard, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

Among the *dhanni* [non-definite] sources of *tafsīr*, Ahādīth and Āthār occupy the highest status. If their authenticity could have been fully relied upon, they would have had the same importance in *tafsīr* as the Sunnat-i Mutawātirah. However, since Ahādīth and Āthār do not possess this degree of authenticity, they can only be benefited from as far as they are found to be in conformity with the absolute principles of interpreting the Qur’ān delineated above. Those who give such importance to the Ḥadīth that they make the Qur’ān subservient to it are neither aware of the status of the Qur’ān nor that of the Ḥadīth. On other hand, people who don’t even refer to the Ahādīth and Āthār in interpreting the Qur’ān deprive themselves of a great treasure second only to the Qur’ān. I consider the Ḥadīth to be totally derived from the Qur’ān; thus I have not confined myself to Ahādīth which are mentioned in relation to a verse of the Qur’ān; as far as I could, I have tried to benefit from the whole corpus of the Ḥadīth. They have helped me the most in understanding the wisdom of the Qur’ān. If I have found a Ḥadīth which is not in harmony with the Qur’ān, I have deliberated upon it for a long period, and I have only rejected it when it became abundantly clear to me that it was against the Qur’ān or it was in conflict with some principle of religion. As far as correct Ahādīth are concerned, seldom has there arisen a case in which they contradict the Qur’ān; however, when this was the case, I have preferred the Qur’ān to them, and have written my reasons of this preference in detail.⁶⁸

Thirdly, whatever scholars and exegetes have written must be given due consideration. It is only by benefiting from the works of previous scholars that new dimensions are added in such disciplines; this cannot be done by ignoring them. True knowledge does not come through arrogance and haughtiness; it comes with humility and a sincere love for the truth. Thus it is essential that students of the Qur’ān must always study the primary exegetical works on the Qur’ān when they are forming an opinion or deliberating on and teaching a verse. Prior to the leading scholars of the Farāhī school who have worked on Qur’ānic exegesis, three primary works on the exegesis of the Qur’ān can be identified: *Jāmi‘ al-bayān* of Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* of al-Rāzī and *Al-Kashshāf* of al-Zamakhsharī. The first of these is a compendium of the opinions of authorities of the past; the second mostly deals with theological issues and

third with declensions and syntax. From among these primary works, though a student of the Qur'ān should only take what is in harmony with the words of the Qur'ān and its coherence and arrangement, however, he should never ignore these works.

2. Principles of Determining the Sunnah

The Sunan (plural of Sunnah) have been enumerated in the beginning of this chapter. In the following paragraphs, some of the important principles of determining these Sunan are elaborated upon.

i. The First Principle

Only that thing can be a Sunnah which is religious by nature and status. The Qur'ān is absolutely clear that the prophets of Allah were sent to deliver His religion. In their prophetic capacity, the ambit of their thoughts and deeds was only that of religion. Everything besides this, was primarily of no concern to them. No doubt, besides their prophetic capacity, they were also Ibrāhīm ibn Āzar, Mūsā ibn 'Imrān, 'Isā ibn Maryam and Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullāh in their human capacity; however, in this human capacity, they never asked obedience from their followers. All their demands were confined to their prophetic capacity, and what was given to them in this capacity was religion, and thus it was only religion whose propagation they were liable to:

شَرَعَ لَكُم مِّنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى
وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ (٤٢:١٣)

He has enjoined on you the same religion which He enjoined on Noah, and which We have now revealed to you, which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, with the assertion: “Adhere to this religion [in your lives] and do not create any divisions in it.” (42:13)

Consequently, it is known history that the Prophet (sws) used weapons like swords and arrows in wars, travelled on camels, constructed a mosque whose roof was made of stems of palm trees, ate some foods which were customary in the Arab society and showed his like or dislike for them, wore a certain dress which was in vogue in Arabia and whose selection also had much to do with his personal taste – however, none of these things can be termed Sunnah and neither can any man of learning regard them to be Sunnah. At one instance, the Prophet (sws) himself is reported to have said:

إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ إِذَا أَمْرَتُكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ دِينِكُمْ فَخُذُوهُ بِهِ وَإِذَا أَمْرَتُكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ رَأْيِي فَإِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ...
إِنَّمَا ظَنَنتُ طَنَنًا فَلَا تُؤَاخِذُونِي بِالظَّنِّ وَلَكِنْ إِذَا حَدَّثْتُكُمْ عَنِ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا فَخُذُوهُ بِهِ فَإِنِّي لَنْ

أَكَذَّبَ عَلَىَ اللَّهِ ... أَتُنْهِمُ أَعْلَمُ بِأَمْرٍ دُنْيَا كُمْ

I am also a human being. When I direct you about something which relates to your religion, take it from me and when I express my own opinion [about something which is outside this sphere], then my status in this regard is nothing more than that of a human being ... I had conjectured about something.⁶⁹ Do not hold me accountable for such things which are based on opinion and conjecture. However, if I say something on behalf of God, take it because I will never forge a lie on God ... You very well know about your worldly affairs.⁷⁰

ii. The Second Principle

The Sunnah entirely relates to practical affairs of life. Belief, ideology, history, occasions of revelation (*sha'n al-nuzūl*) and other similar things do not fall in its sphere. In the Arabic language, Sunnah means “trodden path”. The way the Almighty dealt with peoples to whom messengers were sent by rewarding or punishing these people is called *sunnatullāh* by the Qur'ān. Consequently, the word Sunnah cannot be applied to things such as faith, and nothing which relates to theoretical knowledge can be regarded as Sunnah. Its ambit is practical things and everything that does not fall in this ambit cannot be called Sunnah.

iii. The Third Principle

The third principle is that even things which belong to the practical sphere cannot be regarded Sunnah if they are initiated by the Qur'ān. It is known that the Prophet Muhammad (sws) had amputated the hands of thieves, flogged criminals of adultery, stoned people to death for sexual misconduct, fought with people who deliberately denied the truth – however, all these acts cannot be termed Sunnah. All these are directives initiated by the Qur'ān, and the Prophet (sws) merely followed them. On the other hand, directives such as the prayer, the fast, *zakāh*, *hajj* and animal sacrifice are also mentioned in the Qur'ān and it has also made some corrections in them; however, it becomes evident from the Qur'ān itself that these directives were initiated by Muhammad (sws) himself once he had revived them as part of the religion of Abraham (sws) and given them religious sanction. Thus they must be regarded as Sunnah which the Qur'ān has ratified. So if something is originally based on the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws) has merely explained it or followed it in exactly the same way he was directed to, then these words or acts of the Prophet (sws) will not be called Sunnah; they will be termed as the Prophet's explanation and exemplary manner in which he acted upon them. Only those things will be regarded as Sunnah which are originally based on the words, practices or tacit approvals of the Prophet (sws), and they cannot be regarded as following a directive of the Qur'ān or an explanation of a directive mentioned in it.

69. Reference is to the opinion he gave to the people of Madīnah regarding the pollination of palm-trees.

70. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-sahīh*, 1038-1039, (nos. 6127, 6126, 6128).

iv. The Fourth Principle

A new Sunnah is not constituted by merely observing some Sunnah in an optional manner. We know that the Prophet (sws) while obeying the Qur'ānic directive: (١٥٨ : ٢) (وَمَنْ طَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلَيْهِ) (he who does a virtue of his own will, God accepts it and is all-knowing, (2:158)) offered optional prayers besides the obligatory ones, fasted optionally besides the obligatory fasts of Ramadān, offered animal sacrifice at instances in which it was not obligatory; however, none of these optional acts of worship constitute a new Sunnah. The way the Prophet (sws) showed diligence in worshipping over and above what was required of him can definitely be termed as a good example that he set for his followers; however, it cannot be regarded as an independent Sunnah.

Similar is the case of doing some deed of religion in its most ultimate and perfect form. The *wudū* (ablution) and *ghusl* (bathing) of the Prophet (sws) are two very good examples that can be presented in this regard. The way the Prophet (sws) went about doing these does not constitute any independent or original deed that they may be regarded as another Sunnah. He has in fact tried to obey an original Sunnah in its most complete and perfect form. Hence they shall be regarded as the exemplary form in which he acted upon a Sunnah, and not regarded as independent Sunan.

v. The Fifth Principle

Things which merely state some aspects of human nature cannot be regarded as Sunnah except if the prophets of God have made any of them an essential part of religion. Beasts having canine teeth, wild birds having claws and tamed donkeys have been prohibited by the Prophet (sws); however, this prohibition is only a delineation of human nature.⁷¹ Hence this prohibition cannot be termed as Sunnah. Earlier in this chapter, while discussing the principles of understanding the Qur'ān, it has been reasoned out in the sub-section “Hadīth and the Qur'ān” found in the section “The Final Authority” that after the prohibition of certain food items mentioned in the Qur'ān (6:145 and 2:173) this is a mere delineation of human nature. Man inherently knows that lions, tigers and elephants are not meant to be eaten. He is also well aware of the fact that horses and mules are a means of transportation and have no role in satisfying one's hunger. There are some other similar things also which have been mentioned in various narratives and should be understood thus, and not as independent Sunan.

vi. The Sixth Principle

Those guidelines of the Prophet (sws) also cannot be regarded as Sunnah the nature of which is fully sufficient to show that the Prophet (sws) never wanted to constitute them as Sunnah. One example of this are the utterances and supplications which are said in the *qa'dah*. It is evident from various narratives that the Prophet (sws) taught the *tashahhud* and the *durūd* to be recited in the *qa'dah*;

71. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 716, (no. 4216); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 591, 864, (nos. 3433, 4994).

however, it is also very clear from these narratives that neither did the Prophet (sws) himself prescribe these supplications for this occasion nor, after teaching them, did he make them mandatory upon people to read them. They are part of his favourite supplications and nothing better than these can be imagined; however, in this regard, his own attitude shows that he did not want to bind people in any way. He in fact wanted to give them the option to either read these supplications which he taught them or read some others to invoke the Almighty. Thus the only thing that is Sunnah in this regard is that one must sit in the *qa'dah* position in the second and last *rak'at* of the prayer; other than this, no other thing is Sunnah in this sphere.

vii. The Seventh Principle

Just as the Qur'ān is not validated through *khabar-i wāhid*, the Sunnah is also not validated through it. The Sunnah is an independent source of religion. The Prophet Muḥammad (sws) was liable to communicate it with great care and diligence in its original form and in a manner that would render it certain. It was not left to a person's choice to communicate it further as is the case of a *khabar-i wāhid*. Consequently, the source of the Sunnah is the consensus of the *ummah*, just as the source of the Qur'ān is the consensus of the *ummah*. Just as the Qur'ān has been transmitted to the *ummah* by the consensus and verbal perpetuation of the Companions (rta) of the Prophet (sws), the Sunnah is transmitted to the *ummah* by their consensus and their practical perpetuation. Less than this extent of validation, the Qur'ān and Sunnah cannot be accepted; only the Ahādīth, which depict the exemplary personality of the Prophet (sws) or which contain his explication are transmitted through lesser means of validation.

These are the seven principles of determining the Sunnah. If what has been transmitted to the *ummah* by the Prophet (sws) other than the Qur'ān is deliberated upon in the light of these principles, the Sunnah, like the Qur'ān, can be determined with absolute certainty.

3. Principles of Understanding the Ḥadīth

Aḥādīth (plural of Ḥadīth) are narratives which record the words, deeds and tacit approvals of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws). They are mostly *akhbār-i ahād* (isolate reports). It is absolutely evident that they do not add to the contents of religion stated in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. In technical terms, they do not add any article of faith or any deed to religion. It has been stated at the beginning of this chapter that it is outside the scope of Aḥādīth to give an independent directive not covered by the Qur'ān and Sunnah. However, this is also a reality that the Ḥadīth literature is the largest and most important source which records the biography, history and the exemplary life of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) as well as his invaluable explanations of various issues of religion. Thus it occupies such great importance that no student of religion can ignore it. It is because of this importance of Ḥadīth that it is essential to know the principles which help us in understanding them.

Before elaborating on these principles, we will first have a look at the grounds on the basis of which a Ḥadīth is accepted or rejected.

i. Chain of Narration of a Ḥadīth

It is the chain of narration of a narrative which makes it a Ḥadīth that can be attributed to the Prophet (sws). In addition to any hidden flaws in the chain of narration of a Ḥadīth ('ilal), the probity of the narrators ('adl),⁷² their grasp and memory (*dabt*) and their contemporaneity (*ittiṣāl*) are the three standards which should be kept in consideration in the light of the material which the scholars of Ḥadīth have painstakingly made available. This is the standard which scholars of Ḥadīth have put forth for the examination of the chain of narration of a Ḥadīth, and is so sound that no addition can be made to it nor anything taken away from it.

Since attributing something suspect to the Prophet (sws) can be of severe consequences in this world and in that to come, it is necessary to apply this standard without any lenience and with absolute impartiality to every narrative attributed to him. Only those narratives should be considered acceptable which fully conform to this standard. Thus no narrative attributed to the Prophet (sws) even if found in primary works as the *al-Jāmi al-ṣahīḥ* of Imām Bukhārī, *al-Jāmi al-ṣahīḥ* of Imām Muslim and the *al-Mu'attī* of Imām Mālik can be accepted without application of this standard.

ii. Text of a Ḥadīth

After investigating the chain of narration of a Ḥadīth, the second thing which requires investigation is the text of a Ḥadīth. Although scholars of Ḥadīth have left no stone unturned in investigating the characters and biographies of the narrators and have spent a greater part of their lives in this research, yet like every human endeavour, the natural flaws which still exist in the narration of a Hadīth⁷³ require that the following two things must always remain in consideration while investigating the text of a Ḥadīth:

1. Nothing in it should be against the Qur'ān and Sunnah.
2. Nothing in it should be against established facts derived from knowledge and reason.

It has already been explained that in religion the Qur'ān is the *mīzān* (the scale of truth) and the *furqān* (the distinguisher between truth and falsehood). It is like a guardian of every religious concept and it has been revealed as a barometer to judge between what is right and what is wrong. Thus no further explanation is required of the fact that if anything is against the Qur'ān, then it must stand rejected.

72. The soundness of character of the Companions of the Prophet (sws), however is an exception and does not need the conformation of any standard. The Almighty Himself has borne witness to it in His Book. See: The Qur'ān, 3:110.

73. For details see: Amīn Ahṣān Islāhī, *Mabādī tadabbur-i hadīth*, 1st ed., Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1991.

Similar is the case of the Sunnah. Whatever religion has been received through it is as certain and authentic as the Qur’ān, as has already been explained earlier. There is no difference between the level of authenticity of the two. Just as the Qur’ān is validated thought the consensus of the *ummah*, the Sunnah is also determined from its consensus. Since this fact is an absolute reality about the Sunnah, thus if a Ḥadīth is against the Sunnah and if there is no way out to resolve a conflict between the two, the Ḥadīth in consideration must necessarily be rejected.

Established facts derived from knowledge and reason also have the same status in this regard. The Qur’ān is absolutely clear that its message is based on these established facts. Even its arguments on such basic issues as *tawhīd* and the Hereafter are primarily based on these facts. It is the requirements and demands of these facts which the Qur’ān highlights through its teachings. Every student of the Qur’ān is aware that it presents these facts as deciding factors for the message it puts forth. It presented them as the final word both before the Idolaters of Arabia and the People of the Book. Those who oppose these are regarded by it as people who follow their base desires. Thus intuitive realities, historical truths, results of experience and observation – all are discussed in the Qur’ān in this very capacity. Hence how can a Ḥadīth which is against these facts regarded by the Qur’ān as ones which distinguish between the truth and untruth be accepted? It is obvious that it shall stand rejected. All leading scholars of Ḥadīth also hold this view. Al-Khaṭīb writes:

ولا يقبل خبر الواحد في منافاة حكم العقل وحكم القرآن الثابت المحكم والسنّة المعلومة والفعل
الجاري مجرّد السنّة كل دليل مقطوع به

A *khabar-i wāhid* cannot be accepted which is against sense and reason, is against an established and explicit directive of the Qur’ān, is against a known Sunnah or is against a practice which is observed like the Sunnah or its conflict with some conclusive argument becomes absolutely evident.⁷⁴

Let us now take a look at the principles of understanding the Ḥadīth:

i. Literary Appreciation of the Arabic Language

Just as the Qur’ān has been revealed in highly literary Arabic, the language of the Ḥadīth too is highly literary Arabic. There is no doubt that a great number of Ahādīth have not been transmitted in their original words, yet whatever much has been preserved of the language of the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta) is still enough for a keen student of the Qur’ān to distinguish it from other material. Like the Qur’ān, the language of the Ḥadīth too has a certain standard which does not accept any adulteration of material substandard to it. Thus it is necessary that by a continuous study of its language, students of Ḥadīth are able to acquire

74. Ahmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Thābit al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Al-Kifāyah fī ‘ilm al-riwayah* (Madīnah: Al-Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 432.

enough skill of the language so as to reject narratives like ^{الشیخ و الشیخة}⁷⁵ on the very basis of the language used in it. Similarly, they should have no problems in understanding the rather difficult style used in ^{اللکر بالکر}⁷⁶. This skill is also required to solve difficulties posed by the syntax and morphology of the Arabic language. A person should have a deep study of what the authorities of these subjects have written. No one is able to solve the difficulties of Ḥadīth unless he is conversant with the delicacies of the Arabic language and its various styles and constructions.

ii. Interpretation in the Light of the Qur’ān

The Ḥadīth should be interpreted in the light of the Qur’ān. The status occupied by the Qur’ān has already been alluded to earlier. It is the most definite and authentic record of whatever Muḥammad (sws) did in his status of a Prophet and a Messenger. Consequently, most topics covered in the Ḥadīth are related to the Qur’ān the way a branch is related to a stem or the way an explanation is related to the text it explains. Without a recourse to the original text, it is obvious that its corollaries and explanations cannot be understood. If all the mistakes in interpreting the Ḥadīth are minutely analyzed, this situation becomes abundantly clear. The incidents of stoning to death in the times of the Prophet (sws), the assassination of Ka'b ibn Ashraf, punishment meted out in the graves, narratives of intercession and directives as أَمْرْتُ أَنْ أَقْاتِلَ النَّاسَ (I have been directed to wage war against these people)⁷⁷ and مَنْ يَدْعَ دِينَهُ فَاقْتُلُوهُ (execute the person who changes his faith)⁷⁸ have become issues which have caused a lot of confusion and have been subjected to misinterpretation because they have not been understood by relating them to their basis in the Qur’ān.

In short, if this principle is kept in consideration, a lot of perplexities are resolved in understanding the Ḥadīth.

iii. Understanding the Occasion of the Ḥadīth

A Ḥadīth must be understood with reference to the instance and occasion of the topic it records. What was the occasion on which it was said? What was the background in which it was said? Who were the addressees? If one does not address these questions in interpreting a Ḥadīth, on many occasions one fails to get to the right interpretation. The Ḥadīth ^{الائمة من قريش} (the rulers will be from the Quraysh)⁷⁹ is a famous narrative. By the apparent words of this Ḥadīth, scholars of our *ummah* have been led to believe that a Muslim ruler must always be from among the tribe of the Quraysh. If this is accepted then at least with reference to the

75. Mālik, *Al-Mu’attā*, 540, (no. 2568); Abū ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Mājah al-Qazwīnī, *Sunan*, 1st ed., vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmīyyah, 1998), 232-233, (no. 2553).

76. Muslim, *Al-Jami‘ al-sahīh*, 749, (no. 4414).

77. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jami‘ al-sahīh*, 7, (no. 25); Muslim, *Al-Jami‘ al-sahīh*, 33, (no. 129).

78. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jami‘ al-sahīh*, 498, (no. 3017).

79. Abū ‘Abdullāh Ahmād ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār ihyā’ al-turāth al-‘arabī, 1994), 583, (no. 11898).

political system there remains no difference between Islam and Brahmanism. The basic reason in misinterpreting this Ḥadīth is the fact that this statement of the Prophet (sws) related to the political situation which was to arise right after him; instead of understanding this aspect, the directive stated in it was regarded to be an independent directive of religion applicable for all times. There are numerous such Ahādīth in canonical works and they cover very important topics. It is essential that they be understood by keeping in consideration this principle.

iv. Analysis of all the Variant Texts

All the variant texts of a Ḥadīth must be studied in order to form an opinion about it. Many a time, a person may form an opinion about a Ḥadīth by not studying its variants; however, once he deliberates on all the variants his overall interpretation changes. One glaring example of this are the Ahādīth which mention the prohibition of pictures and portraits. If only some of the narratives are studied, one can easily conclude that this prohibition is absolute and every picture and portrait is prohibited in Islam. However, if all the variants are collected and analyzed, it becomes evident that the prohibition is regarding only those pictures which have been made for worshipping. Several similar examples can be cited from the corpus of the Ḥadīth. Thus it is essential that if one is not satisfied from the apparent words of a Ḥadīth, one must gather and collate all its variants to form an opinion.

v. Reason and Revelation

It must be appreciated that reason and revelation never contradict. Earlier on, while explaining the principles of acceptance or rejection of a Ḥadīth, it has been explained that religion is based on universally established facts derived from knowledge and reason, and if a Ḥadīth appears to be contradicting these established facts, then it must be deliberated upon repeatedly. However, summarily rejecting a Ḥadīth, if it appears to be against these facts is not the correct academic approach. Similarly, ignoring these facts and accepting an insubstantial interpretation of the Ḥadīth should also not be the case. Experience shows that when a narrative is analyzed in the correct perspective, then many a time no contradiction remains with these facts and what is stated in the Ḥadīth becomes very clear. This of course can only be achieved when it is fully accepted that there can be no contradiction between reason and revelation. The works of scholars who have kept this principle in consideration speak volumes of how aptly they have been able to interpret a Ḥadīth. Thus one must always take into account this all important principle in interpreting the Ḥadīth.

اللهم ارنا الحق حقاً وارزقنا اتباعه وارنا الباطل باطلاً وارزقنا اجتنابه

(O God! Show us the truth the way it is and make us follow it and show us falsehood the way it is and make us abstain from it.)

The True Religion

1. Essence of Religion

In one word, the essence of religion in Qur'ānic terms is “‘ibādah” (worship) of God. It is in reality “worship” which the Creator of this world desires of His servants. The Qur'ān says:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونَ (٥٦:٥١)

And I created jinn and mankind only to worship Me. (51:56)

At various places in the Qur'ān, it is mentioned very clearly that the Almighty sent His messengers to inform people of this very reality:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الظَّاغُورَةَ (٣٦:١٦)

And We raised a messenger in each nation with the message: “Worship God and keep away from *al-Tāghīt*.” (16:36)

What does “worship” mean? A little deliberation on the above verse of Sūrah Nahl reveals the answer: Here man has been asked, on the one hand, to refrain from what is *al-Tāghīt* and, on the other, to worship God. *al-Tāghīt* and *al-Shaytān* are used synonymously in the Qur'ān: they refer to someone who is arrogant and rebellious before the Almighty. The opposite of this obviously is humility and modesty. Consequently, lexicographers generally explain worship as أصل العبودية الخضوع والتذلل (worship, in fact, is humility and servility).¹

If this humility and servility exists in a person with a true comprehension of the mercy, power, providence and wisdom of the Almighty then it is instrumental in totally humbling a person before Him with His great love and great fear. The Qur'ānic words *khushū'*, *khudū'*, *ikhbāt*, *inābah*, *khashyah*, *taḍarru'*, *qunūt* etc are used to depict this very state of a person – a state which originates from his inner-self and which then embraces his whole self. *Dhikr* (remembering God to attain peace and inner satisfaction), *shukr* (expressing immense gratitude to God on His abounding favours), *taqwā* (fearing God's anger), *ikhlāṣ* (devoting one's self to God), *tawakkul* (trusting God), *tafwīd* submitting one's self and all of

1. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 3, 271.

one's affairs to God), *taslīm-o ridā* (being content at all decisions of God) – all of these are the inner manifestations of this relationship between the worshipped God and His worshippers. In the words of the Qur'ān, this relationship practically manifests itself in the following ways:

إِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرُوا بِهَا خَرُوْا سُجَّدًا وَسَبَّحُوا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ
تَسْجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفَقُونَ (٣٢:١٥-١٦)

None profess belief in Our revelations except those who, when reminded through them, prostrate themselves in adoration and give glory to their Lord while expressing their gratitude to Him and are not rebellious to their Lord. Their backs forsake their beds; they pray to their Lord in fear and in hope and who spend [in His way] from what We gave them. (32:15-16)

This kneeling, prostrating, glorifying and praising the Lord, supplicating before Him and sacrificing life and wealth for His pleasure – all these are real forms of “worship”. However, since a person is not mere beliefs; he also has a practical life in this world, this “worship” relates to this practical life as well and in this manner becomes inclusive of obedience. It now requires that a person’s outer-self also bow before the Creator before Whom his inner-self has bowed. His outer-self should also become subservient to the Creator to Whom his inner-self has become subservient, to the extent that no aspect of life should be left out of it. In other words, he should become a servant of his Lord in every sense of the word. The Qur’ān says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكُعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ وَافْعُلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (٢٢:٧٧)

Believers! Kneel and prostrate yourselves and become servants of your Lord and do good deeds that you may succeed. (22:77)

2. Definition of Religion

When “worship” prescribes metaphysical and ethical bases for this relationship between a servant and His Lord, institutes rituals and stipulates bounds and limits to fulfil the requisites of this relationship in this world, then in the terminology of the Qur’ān, this is called “religion” (*dīn*). The form of this religion which the Almighty has explained to mankind through His prophets is called “the true religion” (*dīn al-haqq*) by the Qur’ān, and its followers are directed by the Qur’ān to fully adopt it in their lives and not create any divisions in it:

شَرَعَ لَكُم مِّنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى
وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ (٤٢:١٣)

He has prescribed for you the same religion which He prescribed for Noah, and which We have now revealed to you and which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, with the assertion: “Adhere to this religion [in

your lives] and do not create any divisions in it.” (42:13)

3. Contents of Religion

The metaphysical and ethical bases of this worship which have been prescribed by religion are called *al-Hikmah*, and the rituals and limits prescribed for it by religion are called *al-Kitāb* by the Qur’ān:

وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلِمْتُمَا مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُ وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ عَظِيمًا (١١٣:٤)

And God has revealed to you *al-Kitāb* and *al-Hikmah* and in this manner taught you what you did not know before, and great is God’s favour upon you. (4:113)

وَإِذْ كُرُوا نَعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ يَعْلَمُكُمْ بِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٢٣١:٢)

And remember the favours He has bestowed upon you, and the *al-Kitāb* and *al-Hikmah* which He has revealed to you, of which He instructs you and keep fearing Allah and know that He has knowledge of all things. (2:231)

The Qur’ān also refers to *al-Kitāb* as *sharī‘ah*:

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ عَلَى شَرِيعَةٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ فَاتَّبِعُوهَا وَلَا تَشْيَعْ أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (١٨:٤٥)

Then We set you on a clear *sharī‘ah* regarding religion. So follow it, and do not yield to the desires of men who know not. (45:18)

al-Hikmah has always remained the same in all revealed religions; however, the *sharī‘ah* has remained different due to evolution and change in human civilizations and societies:

لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً (٥:٤٨)

We have ordained a law and assigned a path for each of you. Had God pleased, He could have made of you one community. (5:48)

A study of divine scriptures shows that the *sharī‘ah* constitutes the major portion of the Torah and the *hikmah* generally constitutes the Injīl. The Psalms are hymns which glorify the Almighty and are a forerunner to the *hikmah* of the Injīl. The Qur’ān was revealed as a masterpiece of literature comprising both *sharī‘ah* and *hikmah* giving warning to those who evade it and glad tidings to those who follow it. The fact that the Qur’ān is a blend of both *sharī‘ah* and *hikmah* is clearly mentioned in the verses 2:231 and 4:113 quoted above. About the Torah and the Injīl, the Almighty while narrating one of His dialogues which will take place with Jesus (sws) on the Day of Judgement says:

وَإِذْ عَلِمْتُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالْتَّوْرَاةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ (١١٠:٥)

And when I instructed you with the *sharī'ah* and the *hikmah*, that is the Torah and the Gospel. (5:110)

al-Hikmah basically comprises the following two topics:

1. Faith
2. Ethics

al-Kitāb comprises the following ten topics:

1. The *Shari'ah* of Worship Rituals
2. The Social *Shari'ah*
3. The Political *Shari'ah*
4. The Economic *Shari'ah*
5. The *Shari'ah* of Preaching
6. The *Shari'ah* of *Jihād*
7. The Penal *Shari'ah*
8. The Dietary *Shari'ah*
9. Islamic Customs and Etiquette
10. Oaths and their Atonement

This is all as far as the content of religion is concerned.

4. Prophets and Messengers

The envoys of God who have brought this religion are called “Prophets”. A study of the Qur’ān shows that besides being assigned the position of “Prophethood” (*nubuwwah*), some of them were also assigned the position of “Messengerhood” (*risālah*).

“Prophethood” means that a person after receiving divine revelation teaches the truth to his addressees, and gives glad tidings of a good fate in the Hereafter to those who accept the truth and warns those among them who reject it that a bad fate awaits them. In the terminology of the Qur’ān, delivering such glad tidings is called *bashārah* and delivering such warnings is called *indhār*:

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَيَعْثَرُ اللَّهُ النَّبِيُّنَ مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ (٢١٣:٢)

Mankind was once one community. [Then differences arose between them]. So God sent forth prophets as bearers of glad tidings and as warners. (2:213)

“Messengerhood” means that a prophet is assigned to his people such that he decides their fate through divine sanction so that if they reject him, he practically enforces the sovereignty of the truth upon them by implementing on them God’s Judgement in this very world:

وَلِكُلٌّ أُمَّةٌ رَسُولٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٤٧:١٠)

And for each community, there is a messenger. Then when their messenger comes, their fate it decided with justice and they are not wronged. (10:47)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَاجُّونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ فِي الْأَذْلَى كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلَبِنَّ أَنَا وَرَسُولِي إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ (٥٨ : ٢١ - ٢٠)

Indeed those who are opposing Allah and His Messenger shall be humiliated. The Almighty has ordained: "I and My messengers shall always prevail. Indeed Allah is Mighty and Powerful." (58:20-21)

It is in accordance with this established practice about *risālah* that it was thus ordained about Muhammad (sws):

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كُلُّهُمْ لَوْ كَرِهُ الْمُشْرِكُونَ (٩:٦١)

It is He Who has sent his *rasūl* with guidance and the religion of truth that he may make it sovereign over all religions [of Arabia], even though these Idolaters [of Arabia] may detest this. (61:9)

The way this established practice about *risālah* manifests itself is that the Almighty selects His messengers so that reward and punishment can be meted out in this world through them before the actual Day of Judgement. It becomes a miniature rehearsal of what is going to take place on that Day. These messengers are told that if they honour their covenant with God, they will be rewarded in this very world and if they do not do so, they will be punished in this very world. The result is that the very existence of these messengers becomes a sign of God, and it is as if their people can observe God walking on earth with these messengers and delivering His verdicts. On the basis of the signs of truth that they have directly observed, they are directed to propagate the truth and present to the people with full certainty the very guidance of God the way they have received it from Him. In the terminology of the Qur'ān, this is called *shahādah*. Once this is established, it becomes a basis of the judgement of the Almighty both in this world and in that to come. Consequently, the Almighty grants dominance to these messengers, and punishes those who reject the message presented by these messengers. For this very reason, Muhammad (sws) is called *shāhid* and *shahīd* in the Qur'ān:

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ رَسُولًا شَاهِدًا عَلَيْكُمْ كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْ فِرْعَوْنَ رَسُولًا (١٥:٧٣)

[O Quraysh of Makkah!] We have sent forth a Messenger to you to bear witness before you, just as earlier We sent a Messenger to the Pharaoh. (73:15)

This position of *shahādah* was bestowed, besides other messengers, upon the progeny of Abraham (sws) too. For this reason, the Qur'ān (2:143) called them

an intermediate group (*ummah-i wasat*) between God's Messenger and His creation, and asserted that they have been chosen for this position just as the Almighty chooses some great personalities among mankind and grants them the status of a prophet or a messenger:

وَجَاهُدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقًّا جِهَادِهِ هُوَ اجْتِبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ مُّلَةً أَبِيكُمْ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ هُوَ سَمَّا كُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلٍ وَفِي هَذَا لَيْكُونَ الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ
عَلَى النَّاسِ (٢٢:٧٨)

And struggle for the cause of God in a befitting manner. He has chosen you [for this responsibility], and laid on you no burdens in the observance of your faith. He has chosen for you the way of Abraham, your father. He named you Muslims earlier and in this [period of the last Prophet] as well. [He had chosen you] so that the Prophet may bear witness before you, and that you yourselves may bear witness [to this religion] before other people of this world. (22:78)

5. Purpose of Divine Books

Generally, the Almighty has also revealed His books with prophets and messengers, and, according to the Qur'ān, the purpose of their revelation is to judge between what is right and what is wrong so that people can resolve their differences through them. In this manner, they are able to adhere to justice regarding the truth. The Qur'ān says:

وَأَنَزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ (٢ : ٢١٣)

And with these [prophets], He sent down His Book as the decisive truth so that it may settle these differences between people. (2:213)

وَأَنَزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ (٥٧ : ٢٥)

And with these [messengers] We sent down Our Book which is the Judge [between the right and the wrong] so that [through it] people are able to adhere to justice [regarding what is the truth]. (57:25)

6. The Responsibility of Indhār

The chain of prophets and messengers began with Adam (sws) and ended on Muḥammad (sws). After his departure, divine revelation ceased and the institution of Prophethood was terminated (the Qur'ān, 33:40). Consequently, the responsibility of *indhār* ie. to warn people to adhere to their religion now lies with the scholars of the *ummah* till the Day of Judgement. This responsibility has been mentioned in the Qur'ān in the following words:

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَيَنْفِرُوا كَافَةً فَلَوْلَا كَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لَّيَتَقْهِمُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلَيُنَذِّرُوا
قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَنْهُمْ يَخْذَلُونَ (٩ : ١٢٢)

And it was not possible for all the believers to undertake [this job]. So why did not a few from every group among them come forward to gain sound knowledge in religion and warn the people of their [respective] nations, when [after acquiring knowledge] they returned to them that they take heed. (9:122)

The Almighty has specified that this *indhār* shall be done through the Qur'ān. Verses such as (فَذَكِّرْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مَن يَخَافُ وَعِيدَ (٤٥:٥٠) (remind through the Qur'an whoever fears My warning, (50:45)), and (وَجَاهَهُمْ بِهِ جَهَادًا كَبِيرًا (٥٢:٢٥) (and through this [Qur'an] fight with them with full force, (25:52)) point to this. For this very reason, the Prophet (sws) is a *nadhir* (warner) for the whole world, and the scholars of religion actually communicate his *indhār* to people: (بَارَكَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونُ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا (١:٢٥) (blessed be He who has revealed *al-Furqān* to His servant, that it may warn the whole world, (25:1)). Consequently, the Qur'an says:

وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنذِرَكُمْ بِهِ وَمَن يَلْعَنَ (٦:١٩)

And this Qur'an has been revealed to me that I may thereby warn you and those whom it may reach. (6:19)

7. Islam: The Name of this Religion

The religion introduced in the foregoing pages is called "Islam", and the Almighty has asserted in the Qur'an that no other religion is acceptable to Him:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ ... وَمَن يَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُفْلِمَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْحَاسِرِينَ (٨٥ ، ٣:١٩)

The only true religion in God's sight is Islam ... and he that chooses a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him and in the world to come he will surely be among the losers. (3:19, 85)

Just as the word "Islam" is used for the whole corpus of religion, it is also sometimes used to imply its outer form. As regards its outer form, it consists of the following five things:

1. Bearing witness that there is no god besides Allah and Muḥammad (sws) is His Messenger
2. Offering the prayer
3. Paying *zakāh*
4. Keeping the fasts of Ramadān
5. Offering the *hajj* of the Baytullāh

The Qur'an has stressed upon all these directives at numerous places. In a narrative of the Prophet (sws), all these five have been mentioned thus:

الْإِسْلَامُ أَنْ تَشْهَدَ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَتَبَيَّنَ الصَّلَاةُ وَتُؤْتَيَ الرِّزْكَةُ وَتَصُومُ

رمضان وتحجج البيت

Islam is that you bear witness that there is no god besides Allah, and Muhammad (sws) is His Messenger and be diligent in the prayer and pay the *zakāh* and keep the fasts of Ramadān and offer the *hajj* of the Baytullāh.²

8. Imān: The Inner Aspect of Religion

The inner aspect of religion is “*īmān*” (belief). As per its details mentioned in the Qur’ān, this inner aspect also consists of five things:

1. Belief in God
2. Belief in the Angels
3. Belief in the Prophets
4. Belief in Divine Books
5. Belief in the Day of Judgement

The Qur’ān says:

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلُّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرَّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْ رُسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا عُفْرَانِكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ (٢: ٢٨٥)

The Messenger has believed in what has been revealed to him by His Lord, and so do those who follow [him]. All of them professed faith in God and His angels and His books and His messengers. [They affirm:] “We do not discriminate between any of God’s messengers,” and they said: “We heard and have obeyed. Lord! We seek Your forgiveness, and [believe that on the Day of Judgment] to You shall we return.” (2:285)

The Prophet (sws) while including a corollary of belief in Allah – the good and evil of fate ordained by God – has referred to this set of beliefs in the following manner:

الْإِيمَانُ: أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَتُؤْمِنَ بِالْقَدْرِ خَيْرًا وَشَرًّا

Imān is that you believe in God and His Angels and His Books and His Messengers and the Hereafter and the good and evil fate [ordained by your God].³

i. Permanent Requirements of Imān

When this *īmān*, in its essence, enters the heart and receives its confirmation from it, then on the very basis of its presence requires two things:

- (1) Righteous Deeds (*a’māl-i sālih*)
- (2) Urging one another to the truth and urging one another to remain steadfast

2. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 24-25, (no. 93).

3. Ibid., 22, (no. 93).

on it (*tawāṣīt bi al-ḥaqqa wa tawāṣīt bi al-ṣabr*)

The Qur'ān says:

وَالْعَصْرِ إِنَّ الْأَنْسَانَ لَفِيْ خُسْرٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا
بِالصَّابَرِ (١٠٣ : ١ - ٣)

Time bears witness that these people shall definitely be in a state of loss. Yes! except those who accepted faith and did righteous deeds and urged one another to the truth and urged one another to remain steadfast on it. (103:1-3)

(1) Righteous Deeds

All deeds which result once the morals of a person are purified are called righteous deeds. All their bases are found in human nature and intellect, and the *shari'ah* of God has been revealed to guide mankind towards these righteous deeds.

(2) Urging one another to the truth and urging one another to remain steadfast on it

This relates to one's immediate surroundings. This is an obvious requirement of accepting the truth and is also termed as *amr bi al-ma'rūf* and *nahī 'an al-munkar* by the Qur'ān, implying the fact that a person should exhort those in his surroundings to what is *ma'rūf* (good) according to human nature and intellect and forbid them from what is *munkar* (evil) according to it:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أُولَئِكَ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَاوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ (٧١:٩)

And believers, both men and women, are friends to one another. [They] enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil. (9:71)

Every Muslim should fulfil this requirement of faith as a well-wisher. If a person wants to fulfil this requirement with the right spirit, then it cannot be fulfilled unless he is a well-wisher of his fellow human beings. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

الَّذِينَ النَّصِيحةَ لِلَّهِ وَلِكُتُبِهِ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِائِمَةِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَعَامِلِهِمْ

Religion is well-wishing for God, for His book, for His Messenger, for the rulers of the Muslims and for their common masses.⁴

ii. Contingent Requirements of *Imān*

Described above are the requirements of faith in ordinary circumstances. However, there are certain circumstances in which three other requirements can arise. They are:

(1) Migration for the Cause of Religion (*Hijrah*)

4. Ibid., 44-45, (no. 196).

- (2) Helping the Cause of Religion (*Nuṣrah*)
 (3) Adhering to Justice (*Qiyām bi al-Qist*)

Their details follow:

(1) Migration for the Cause of Religion (Hijrah)

If it becomes difficult for a person to worship the Almighty, he is persecuted for his religious beliefs and a stage comes when it becomes impossible for him to live as a declared Muslim, then his faith requires him to shift to another place where he can openly practice his faith. In the terminology of the Qur'ān, this is called *hijrah* (migration). In the times of the Prophet (sws), when God and His Prophet (sws) directly called people to it, those who evaded it were promised the dreadful doom of Hell by the Almighty:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ طَالِمِي أَنفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمْ كُنْتُمْ قَالُوا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعِفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا كُنْتُمْ أَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةً فَهُنَّا حِرْرُوا فَأَوْلَئِكَ مَا وَاهَمُ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا (٩٧:٤)

The angels will ask people whose souls they take in circumstances such that these [people] had wronged their souls: "In what circumstances were you in?" "We were helpless and oppressed in the land," they will reply. The angels will say: "Was not the earth of God spacious enough for you to migrate [to another place]?" It is these people whose abode shall be Hell, and what an evil abode it is. (4:97)

(2) Supporting the Cause of Religion (*Nuṣrah*)

If there arise circumstances in which for the purpose of protection or dissemination of religion some action is required to be taken, it is a requirement of faith that one should offer this support through whatever means he can. In the terminology of the Qur'ān, this is called *nusrah* (help) of the Almighty. When, after the formation of the Islamic state in Madīnah, the Prophet (sws) required *nusrah*, and people were asked to present themselves for an armed struggle, the Qur'ān called people for this *nusrah* in the following words:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هَلْ أَدْلُكُمْ عَلَى تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيْكُمْ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ثُوَّمُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنفُسِكُمْ دَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ يَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلُكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَحْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَمَسَاكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ وَأَخْرَى تُحْبِبُهَا نَصْرٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيبٌ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا أَنْصَارَ اللَّهِ كَمَا قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيْنَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ (١٤-٦١ : ٦١)

Believers! Shall I point out to you a deal that will save you from a woeful torment? Profess faith in God and His Messenger, and fight for God's cause

with your life and wealth. This would be better for you, if you understand. [In return] God will forgive your sins and admit you to gardens below which streams of water flow; He will lodge you in pleasant mansions in eternal gardens. This is great success. And [Listen!] He will [also bestow upon you] what you desire: help from God and a victory which will soon come. And [O Prophet!] Give these glad tidings to the faithful. Believers! Be God's helpers in the way Jesus son of Mary said to his disciples: "Who will be my helper in the cause of God?" The disciples replied: "We are God's helpers." (61:10-14)

All efforts which have been undertaken in the near or distant past for the protection, survival and revival of religion, have been undertaken to fulfil this requirement of faith. In Muslim history, the source of all these efforts which were through the spoken or the written word or through wealth and money or through the sword and blade is this very requirement of faith. The Qur'ān asserts that if at some time this requirement arises, a true believer should give it the foremost priority and nothing in this world should be dearer to him. The Qur'ān says:

فُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالُ اقْرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةً
تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِنُ تَرْضُوْهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَصُوا
حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ (٢٤:٩)

[O Prophet!] Tell them: "If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your family, the wealth you have acquired, the merchandise you fear may not be sold, and the homes you like, are dearer to you than God, His Prophet and the struggle for His cause, then wait until God makes His Judgement and [keep this in mind that] God does not guide such people who break their promises." (9:24)

(3) Adhering to Justice (Qiyām bi al-Qist)

If emotions, vested-interests and biases try to divert a person from justice in some worldly or religious matter, his faith requires him not only to adhere to justice but also if his witness is required in these matters, he should do so even if it puts his life in danger. He should uphold the truth by saying what is the truth and surrendering before it. He should adhere to justice and bear witness to it, and stick to it in his beliefs and deeds. This is called *qiyām bi al-qist*, and in the Qur'ān it is referred to in the following words:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُوْنُوا قَوَامِينَ بِالْقُسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ اللَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِيْنَ إِنْ
يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا وَإِنْ تَنْتَهُوا أَوْ تُعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا (١٣٥:٤)

Believers! Adhere to justice by bearing witness to it for God, even though it be against yourselves, your parents, or your kinsfolk. If someone is rich or

poor, God only is more worthy for both. So do not be led by base-desires [by leaving His guidance], lest as a result you swerve from the truth. And if you distort [what is true and just] or evade [it, you should remember that] God is well aware of what you do. (4:135)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُوْنُوا قَوَامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقَسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمُنَّكُمْ شَيْءٌ إِلَّا تَعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَيْرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (٤:٨)

Believers! Be those who adhere to justice by bearing witness to it for God. And your animosity for some people should not induce you to turn away from justice. Be just; this is nearer to piety. And have fear of God; indeed, God is well aware of all your deeds. (5:8)

9. The Objective of Religion

The objective of this religion stated in the Qur'ān is *tazkiyah*. This means that the individual and collective lives of people should be purified and their beliefs and deeds be developed in the right direction. At many places in the Qur'ān, it has been mentioned that the objective of mankind is to enter Paradise in which they will be pleased with their Lord and their Lord will be pleased with them, and only those people have been promised Paradise who have purified their souls:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَرَكَ كَيْ وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى بِلْ تُؤْتِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ (٨٧: ١٤ - ١٧)

[At that time], however, successful shall be he who purified himself, and remembered his Lord's name, then prayed. [No], in fact, you give preference to this worldly life in spite of the fact that the life to come is better and more lasting. (87:14-17)

Consequently, it is *tazkiyah* which is the objective and purpose of religion. It is for this end that the prophets were sent, and the whole religion was revealed to guide man in attaining this objective:

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأَمَمِينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتَلَوَّ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ (٦٢: ٦٢)

It is He Who has sent forth among the unlettered a Messenger from their own who recites to them His revelations, purifies them, and [for this, he] instructs them in the *sharī'ah* and in *hikmah*. (62:2)

10. The Correct Religious Attitude

The correct attitude which the followers of this religion should adopt is called *ihsān*. It means to do something in the best possible way. When some religious duty is carried out in a manner that a complete balance is maintained between its form and spirit, every constituent of it is taken fully into consideration and a person does the deed in a manner that he considers himself to be standing before God, then this attitude is called *ihsān*. The Qur'ān says:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِّمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ اللَّهُ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةً إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا (٤:١٢٥)

And who has a better religion than he who submits to God, such that he does *ihsān*, and follows the faith of Abraham, who was devoted to [God]. (4:125)

The Prophet (sws) has explained *ihsān* in the following subtle words:

الإِحْسَانُ: أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَكُ

Ihsān is that you worship God as if you are seeing Him because if you are not able to see Him, He surely sees you.⁵

5. Ibid., 22, (no. 93).

Al-Ḥikmah

Chapter 1

Faith and Beliefs

īmān (faith) is an ancient religious term. The root امن is also found in Hebrew and means considering something to be true and relying on it. The word آمين (amen) is made from this word and through it we corroborate something. In the Qur’ān, *īmān* has been used in this meaning. Thus if something is accepted with the certitude of the heart, then this is called *īmān*. The foundation of this word is *īmān* (faith) in God. If a person accepts the Almighty such that he submits his heart and mind to Him to the utmost, then in the terminology of the Qur’ān, he is a *mu'min* (believer). Imām al-Farāhī writes:

... thus the conviction which exists with all the conditions and corollaries of humility, trust and acknowledgment is called faith. And a person who professes faith in God, in His signs, in His directives, submits all that he has to Him and is happy on all His decisions is called a *mu'min*.¹

It is this very essence of faith on account of which the Qur’ān demands from a person that besides substantiation from the heart, his words and deeds should also testify to it. Thus it calls every act of virtue emanating from *īmān* and an essential quality of a believer. Narratives which say that a Muslim is he from whose hands and tongue other Muslims are secure,² and faith has a little over seventy branches, one of which is modesty,³ and he who has faith in God and the Hereafter should show kindness to his neighbours, respect his guests and say kind words or remain silent,⁴ refer to this very essence of faith. It is evident from this discussion that righteous deeds are mentioned after belief in the Qur’ān as an explanation, and in reality it is like mentioning a specific category after a general one. Imām al-Farāhī writes:

... faith resides in the heart and in the intellect and in matters of heart and intellect a person cannot only deceive others, but at times even deceive himself. He thinks that he is a believer, whereas he is not. For this reason, two

1. Al-Farāhī, *Majmū'ah tafāsīr*, 347.

2. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 5 (no. 10); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 40 (no. 162).

3. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 5, (no. 9); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 38-39, (no. 153).

4. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 1052, (no. 6019); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 42, (no. 176).

witnesses have been appointed over faith: words and deeds. And since words uttered can be untrue, therefore a person who merely professes faith through his words has not been regarded as a believer; it is essential that a person's deeds should testify to his faith.⁵

The Almighty says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجَلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا نُذِيرُتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ رَأَدُّهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَقُولُونَ الَّذِينَ يُقْسِمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُفْغِنُونَ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا لَهُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَعْفَرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ (٨: ٤-٢)

True believers are those whose hearts are filled with awe at the mention of God, and when His revelations are recited before them, their faith grows stronger and they are those who put their trust in their Lord alone, are diligent in their prayer and spend [in Our cause] what We have given them. Such are the true believers. For them are ranks before God and forgiveness and a very respectable sustenance. (8:2-4)

Similarly, the Qur'ān says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَأُوا وَجَاهُدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ (٤٩: ١٥)

True believers are those who have faith in God and His Messenger and then were never entangled in any doubt, and fought with their wealth and with their persons in the cause of God. It is these who are true [in their faith]. (49:15)

No doubt, in the eyes of law, every person who professes faith in Islam with his tongue is a Muslim. The extent of his faith can also not be ascertained as far as law is concerned; however, as far as true faith is concerned, it is never static. Verses 2-4 of Sūrah Anfāl quoted earlier show that the faith of a person grows stronger when he remembers God and hears His revelations and witnesses His signs in the world within him and in that around him. The Qur'ān has compared faith to a tree whose roots are deep in the soil and branches spread in the vastness of the sky:

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلْمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةً طَيِّبَةً أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ثُورِتِي أُكْلَهَا كُلُّ حِينٍ يَأْذِنُ رَبِّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (١٤: ٢٤-٢٥)

Have you not reflected how God has mentioned the example of the word of purity? Its example is like that of a pure tree whose roots are deep in the earth

5. Al-Farāhī, *Majmū‘ah tafāsīr*, 349.

and branches are spread in the sky; it yields its fruit in every season by the directive of God. [This is a parable of the pure word] and God mentions such parables to men so that they may take heed. (14:24-25)

While explaining these verses, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī has written:

In the verse, the expression “word of purity” obviously refers to the “word of faith”. It is compared by the Almighty to a fruit-laden tree whose roots are firmly implanted in the soil and whose branches are nicely spread in the sky and it bears fruit in every season with the blessing of its Lord. Its roots being deeply implanted in the soil refers to the fact that faith is deeply and firmly implanted in human nature and that it is not like a plant which has sprouted from dung that has no root and a slight calamity can uproot it like the word of disbelief about which the Qur’ān has used the words إِحْسَنْتُ مِنْ قَوْقَ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِنْ (فَرَارٌ (٢٦ : ١٤) (which can be uprooted from the very surface of the earth; it has no stability, (14:26)). On the other hand, like a strong tree, it has firm and deeply set roots so that even if a storm passes upon it, it is not even slightly disturbed. The verse goes on to describe that it is lavishly fruit-laden and that it is not like a barren tree which neither provides anyone with shade nor with fruit. Its spaciously spread branches in the sky provide shade to caravans and in every season provides them with sustenance and nourishment from its fruit. This obviously refers to the blessings and benefits which a believer bestows on his own life and through it on others who in some way come in his contact. These blessings and benefits by nature are both ideological as well as practical. They bear witness to a person’s faith and through it a person becomes dear to God and attains His nearness.⁶

Same is the case of one’s faith growing weaker. Thus if a person instead of making it stronger through sound knowledge and righteous deeds does acts which are against the requirements of faith, it grows weaker, and in some cases is totally wiped out. Some verses such as هُمْ لِلْكُفَّارِ يَوْمَنَدُ أَقْرَبُ مِنْهُمْ لِإِيمَانٍ (on that day, they were closer to disbelief than belief)⁷ point to this aspect. The Qur’ān has emphasized that people who continue to lead a life laden with sin, and sin completely encompasses their life or become so arrogant that they deliberately cross the limits set by God or intentionally kill a Muslim, their faith will carry no weight and they will have to face the eternal punishment of Hell⁸ except if God on the basis of His wisdom decides to forgive someone.⁹ Thus at one instance it is said that after disobeying the Prophet (sws), any claim to faith is not acceptable to the Almighty:

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَحَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مَّا

6. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tazkiyah-i nafs*, 4th ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 2005), 325.

7. The Qur’ān, 3:167.

8. The Qur’ān, 2:81; 4:14; 4:93.

9. The Qur’ān, 4:48.

قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا (٦٥:٤)

But they will not – I swear by your Lord – they will not be true believers until they seek your arbitration in their disputes and then feel no discomfort in their hearts on the verdicts you give in their disputes and submit to you entirely. (4:65)

Certain narratives of the Prophet (sws) also explain this reality:

When a fornicator commits fornication, he is not a believer at that time and when a thief commits theft, he is not a believer at that time and when a drinker consumes liquor, he is not a believer at that time.¹⁰

None of you can be a believer unless I become dearer to you than his son, his father and all other people.¹¹

I swear by the one in whose grasp is my life that a person cannot be a believer unless he likes for his brother whatever he likes for himself.¹²

When any person among you sees an evil [in his circle of authority], he should try to curb it by [the force of] his hands. If he does not have the courage to do it, he should try to curb it by his tongue and if [even] this is not possible, he should consider it bad in his heart and this is the lowest level of faith.¹³

It is evident from this that both faith and righteous deeds are essential to one another. Thus just as righteous deeds are necessary for faith, similarly faith is necessary for righteous deeds. At all places, the Qur'ān has stated this professing faith to be the very first condition for salvation. The reason for this is that if a person deliberately rejects the Almighty and His signs or invents a lie upon Him by associating partners with Him, then this is arrogance, and about arrogance the Qur'ān has clearly said that a camel can enter the eye of a needle but an arrogant person cannot enter Paradise:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّىٰ يَلْجَأُوا إِلَيْنَا الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمَاءِ الْحِيَاطِ وَكَذَّلِكَ تَحْزِي الْمُحْرِمِينَ لَهُمْ مِنْ جَهَنَّمَ مَهَادٌ وَمِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ وَكَذَّلِكَ تَحْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ (٤١-٤٠ : ٧)

Indeed those who denied Our revelations and evaded them in arrogance, the gates of heaven shall not be opened for them and neither shall they be able to enter Paradise except if a camel is able to pass through the eye of a needle. [This is their punishment] and thus do We punish the criminals. Hell shall be their bedding and the flames of Hell shall be their covering and in this way do We punish the evil-doers. (7:40-41)

10. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 991, (no. 5578); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 45, (no. 202).

11. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 6, (no. 15); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 41, (nos. 168, 169).

12. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 5, (no. 13); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 41, (no. 170).

13. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 42, (nos. 177, 179).

Consequently, the Qur'ān has said that deeds have no basis without faith. They are like ashes which strong winds have scattered away. On the Day of Judgement, not the slightest bit of these deeds will remain of any worth to them before the Almighty. All that a person earned will be doomed and the punishment of such evil earning would await him:

مَّثُلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَرَمَادٍ اشْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي يَوْمٍ عَاصِفٍ لَا يَقْدِرُونَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا
عَلَى شَيْءٍ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلَالُ الْبَعِيدُ (١٨:١٤)

The deeds of people who disbelieved the Almighty are like ashes which are subjected to severe wind on a stormy day. They shall gain nothing from what they do. This is straying far into error. (14:18)

In Sūrah Nūr, the deeds of people who are devoid of the treasure of faith are compared to the mirage found in a desolate desert which is a mere eye-wash. A thirsty person jumps towards it thinking it to be water but when he draws near, he comes to know that what he thought as waves of water were actually grains of shining sand:

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَسَرَابٌ بِقِبَعَةٍ يَحْسِبُهُ الظَّمَانُ مَاءً حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُهُ لَمْ يَجِدُهُ شَيْئًا وَوَجَدَ
اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ فَوَّاهُ حِسَابٌ وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ (٣٩:٢٤)

And as for the disbelievers, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert. The thirsty thinking that it is water [leapt towards it] until when he came near it he found nothing: In fact, he found God there. Then He took his account and swift is God in taking account. (24:39)

This is the faith which the Qur'ān wants its followers to embrace. It consists of five things:

1. Belief in God
2. Belief in the Angels
3. Belief in the Prophets
4. Belief in Divine Books
5. Belief in the Day of Judgement

The Qur'ān says:

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلُّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرَّقُ بَيْنَ
أَحَدٍ مِّنْ رُسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفرانِكَ رَبِّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ (٢ : ٢٨٥)

The Messenger has believed in what has been revealed to him by His Lord, and so do those who follow [him]. All of them professed faith in God and His angels and His books and His messengers. [They affirm:] "We do not

discriminate between any of God's messengers," and they said: "We heard and have obeyed. Lord! We seek Your forgiveness, and [believe that on the Day of Judgment] to You shall we return." (2:285)

1. Belief in God

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَالَمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةُ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُوْلُوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَمَّيْنُ الْعَرِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشَرِّكُونَ هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَرِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٥٩ : ٢٤ - ٢٢)

He is God, besides whom there is no other deity. He knows the unseen and the manifest. He is the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful. He is God, besides whom there is no other deity. He is the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, Peace in entirety, the Giver of Peace, the Guardian, the Mighty One, the All-powerful, the Most High. Exalted is God above whom they associate with Him! He is God, the Architect, the Originator, the Modeller. All good names are His. All that are in the heavens and the earth give glory to Him. And He is the Mighty, the Wise One. (59:22-24)

Allah is the name of the being Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all other creations. The article *alif lām* appended to the word is for definition, and since the very beginning this name has been specifically used for the Lord of this world. Before the advent of the Prophet (sws), in the times of Arab *jāhiliyyah* also this name was used for Him. This word was also one of the remnants of the religion of Abraham (sws) which the Arabs inherited. Thus the Qur'ān says:

وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتُهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ فَإِنَّمَا يُفَكِّرُونَ اللَّهُ يَسْتَطِعُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتُهُمْ مَنْ نَزَّلَ مِنْ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا يَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ كُلُّ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقُلُونَ (٢٩ : ٦١ - ٦٣)

And if you ask them: "Who has created the heavens and the earth and subjected the sun and the moon [to His law]?" They will reply: "Allah." How are they then deluded away [from the truth]! It is Allah who gives abundantly to whom He pleases and gives sparingly [to whom He pleases]. Allah has knowledge of all things. If you ask them: "Who is it that sent down rain from the clouds and therewith revived the earth after it became dead?" They will say: "Allah." Tell [them]: "Gratitude is for God alone!" But most of them do not use their intellect. (29:61-63)

The Qur'ān informs us that an acknowledgement of the providence of the Almighty is found innately in man's nature. It says that this matter manifested

itself in the form of a pledge. The Qur'ān refers to this event as a real-life incident and not something metaphorical. Since man has been sent here for trial, the whole incident has been erased from his memory; however, its essence is etched on his heart and ingrained in his soul and nothing can obliterate it. Consequently, if man is reminded of it in the absence of any hindrance in his surroundings, he leaps to it the way a child leaps to its mother even though it never saw itself emerge from her womb and is drawn towards her with such conviction as if it already knew her. A person feels that this pledge of his with the Almighty was the answer to a very natural need found within him. Once he got this answer, all the requirements of his psyche were also fulfilled simultaneously. The Qur'ān says that this testimony of man's inner-self is so undeniable that as far as the providence of God is considered, man will be held accountable before God merely on the basis of this testimony:

وَإِذْ أَخَدَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلْسُتُ بِرِبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهَدْنَا
أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنِ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ أَبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرَّةً مِّنْ بَعْدِهِمْ
أَفَتَهِلُّكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُسْطَلُونَ وَكَذَلِكَ تُفَصَّلُ الْآيَاتِ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ (٧: ١٧٢-١٧٤)

And remember when your Lord brought forth from the loins of the progeny of Adam their children and made them testify against themselves. He said: "Am I not your Lord?" They replied: "We bear witness that You are." This We did lest you should say on the Day of Judgement: "We had no knowledge of that," or present the excuse: "Our forefathers had already adopted idolatry and we later became their children so will You destroy us on account of what these false-doers did?" [We have fully explained things here] and thus do We explain Our revelations [so that people are left with no excuse to deny the truth] and so that they may return to the right path. (7:172-174)

Besides this innate guidance, man has also been equipped with the ability of deriving conclusions from what he hears, sees and feels – conclusions which are actually beyond these faculties. A simple example to illustrate this is the law of gravitation. An apple falls on the ground. When a stone is to be lifted from ground, strength must be exerted. It is difficult to ascend stairs than to descend them. The moon and the stars move in the skies. Man has been witnessing all these phenomena for centuries until it was Newton (d. 1727 AD) who discovered that they are a result of the law of gravitation. This law itself cannot be observed; however it is accepted as a scientific reality in the whole world. The reason for this is that all theories and known facts are in harmony with it. All observable realities are explained by this law, and as yet no other law is able to explain various phenomenon as it has done.

This process obviously is the derivation of the tangible from the intangible. When a person makes use of this ability of his and studies the universe which stretches around him, then this study of his also vouches for this very reality found in his inner-self.

Thus he sees that everything of this world is a miraculous manifestation of creativity; everything has deep meaningfulness; it has been created with great diligence and thoroughness; there exists amazing wisdom, planning, usefulness and order; there are found superb mathematical and geometrical realities whose only justification is the fact that they have a Creator and this Creator is not an uncontrolled and unrestrained being. On the contrary, He has an unfathomable mind. This is because if power does not emanate from a wise and all-knowing being, then it should be mere tyranny; the truth of the matter is that this is not so: this expression of power and strength has aptness about it; it is also very harmonious and is very advantageous and produces great marvels which cannot be produced by an uncontrolled and unrestrained force.

This is an indisputable reality; without accepting it, in no way can the intellectual thirst of a person be quenched. Consequently, the Qur'ān has asserted that belief in God is the light of the heavens and the earth. It lights up the heart of a person, and in its absence this world is bleak and murky, meaningless and purposeless.

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مَثُلُّ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاهَ فِيهَا مَصْبَاحٌ الْمُصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةِ الزُّجَاجَةِ
كَانَهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرْرِيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْفَيَّةٌ وَلَا غَرْبَيَّةٌ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ
لَمْ تَمْسِسْهُ نَارٌ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ
شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٢٤ : ٣٥)

[Belief in] Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth! [In the heart of a person] the similitude of His light is like a niche in which there is a lamp – the lamp is in a glass, the glass as if it were a brilliant star – that is being kindled by the oil of a blessed olive tree that is neither of the eastern nor of the western [side]: its oil would all but light up, even though no fire touched it. Light upon light! Allah guides to His light whomever He wishes. [This is a similitude]. And Allah strikes these similitudes [to guide] people. [He deals with each person the way he deserves it]. And Allah has knowledge of everything. (24:35)

Although these testimonies were sufficient, however in order to leave people with no excuse in rejecting them the Almighty took a step further: He initiated mankind by a human being who directly heard from God, saw his angels and in this manner bore direct witness to the truth. The Almighty took this step so that after the death of Adam, the first human being, this information could be transmitted to the descendants of Adam generation after generation and so that the concept of God and the Hereafter should not become alien in any period of time, in any place on the earth and in any generation of mankind. The Qur'ān says that after the creation of Adam and Eve certain superior creations were asked to prostrate before him. The objective was to tell them that it is not creation from fire or light which makes someone superior; on the contrary, real

superiority lies in obedience to God. The Qur'ān says that in compliance with this directive all the angels and the jinn prostrated before Adam; however Iblīs (Satan) showed disobedience and refused to prostrate. After this, Adam and Eve were asked to live in an orchard where they had all the necessities of life but the fruit of one tree was prohibited to them. This tree was the tree of procreation whose fruit is the means of sustaining the existence of man in this world. The Almighty stopped them from tasting this fruit and warned that Iblīs being their open foe would certainly try to make them disobey God in this matter. Consequently, this is precisely what happened and Iblīs came over to them in the guise of a well-wisher and an anxious counsellor and told them that the secret of eternal life and everlasting kingdom lies in this fruit from which they are being deprived. Adam and Eve were lured by these prompts of Iblīs and ended up tasting the fruit while being overwhelmed with its craving – something which normally grips a person when he yearns for such a fruit. It became evident from this incident that man will face the greatest trials from two of his instincts: ego and sex. They were thus directed to come out from the orchard and take their abode at some other place in the earth. At this, Adam felt ashamed and turned to God. Seeing this, the Almighty blessed him with the urge to repent and Himself revealed to him the most appropriate of words for this repentance and then forgave him. The Qur'ān says:

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةَ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنْ الْكَافِرِينَ وَقُلْنَا
يَا آدَمَ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغْدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ فَتَكُونُوا
مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ فَازْلَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ
وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقْرٌ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَى حِينٍ فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَابُ
الرَّحِيمُ (٢: ٣٤-٣٧)

And also narrate to them the incident when We asked the angels to bow down to Adam and they bowed down except Iblīs: he refused and showed arrogance and in this manner became among the rejecters. And We said: "O Adam! dwell you and your wife in this orchard and eat freely in it from wherever you want to; but both of you! Do not go near this tree or you will become transgressors." Then did Satan make them slip and had them turned out from the state they were in. And We said: "Move [out], all [you people] with enmity between yourselves and on earth will be your dwelling-place and a provision for a specified time." Then Adam learnt from his Lord some words of [repentance and then repented before his Lord through these words]; so his Lord accepted his repentance. Indeed He is Forgiving and Merciful. (2:34-37)

Not only this, once Adam and Eve were sent to live in this world, the Almighty, for a considerable period of time, made a means for them to know and judge if their faith and deeds were acceptable to God or not. This was like making every person of that time directly experience and observe the truth so that

he too could become among the witnesses along with his progenitors. It is evident from the Qur’ān (3:183) that the means adopted for this purpose was that people would offer sacrifice before God; then, as a sign of divine acceptance, fire would descend from the heavens to consume this sacrifice. The murder of Adam’s son, Abel took place as result of such an incident. According to the Bible (Genesis, 4:1-12), Abel was a shepherd and Cain was a farmer. One day Cain brought forth some fruit of his land to present before God and Abel bought some first-borns of his cattle and some animal-fat. When these were presented before God, the offering of Abel was accepted and that of Cain was not. This angered the latter so much that he killed his brother Abel. The Qur’ān has described this incident in the following words:

وَأَلْلُهُ عَلَيْهِمْ تَبَّأْ أَنْبِيَادَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ إِذْ قَرَبَا فُرْجَيْنَا فَتُقْتَلُ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقْبَلْ مِنَ الْآخَرِ قَالَ لَأَقْتَلَنَكَ
قَالَ إِنَّمَا يُتَقْبَلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَقْبِلِينَ لَئِنْ سَطَتِ إِلَيَّ يَدَكَ لِتَقْتَلَنِي مَا أَنَا بِبَاسِطٍ يَدِي إِلَيْكَ لِتَقْتَلَنِكَ إِنِّي
أَعْفَ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ تَبُوءَ بِإِلَهِي وَإِلَيْكَ فَتَكُونُ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ وَذَلِكَ حَرَاءُ
الظَّالِمِينَ فَطَوَّعْتُ لَهُ نَفْسِهِ قَتْلَ أَخِيهِ فَقَتَلَهُ فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٥: ٢٧ - ٣٠)

And recount to them in all truth the story of Adam’s two sons when each made an offering, and the offering of one was accepted while that of the other was not. He said: “I will kill you.” The other replied: “God accepts offerings only from the righteous. If you raise your hand to slay me, I shall not raise mine to slay you; for I fear God, Lord of the Universe. I want that you should incur my sin and yours and thus become an inmate of the Fire and such is the punishment of the unjust.” At last, his soul prompted him to slay his brother; he slew him and thus became among the losers. (5:27-30)

It is evident from this discussion that the existence of God is an obvious reality and that the conception of God is inherited by a person through his ancestors. Both the material and the spiritual world bear witness to His existence. However, who is this being? What are His attributes? What are the laws and practices He has set for Himself? These are the questions which arise in the mind of a person for comprehending God. This comprehension is essential for faith. When the Qur’ān demanded from people to profess faith in God, it answered these questions. In the following pages, we will take a look at these answers.

i. Being

The Qur’ān has explicitly stated that no mind can comprehend the being of God. The reason for this is that the being who has created these means of comprehension can certainly comprehend human beings, however these means can in no way be able to comprehend Him who comprehends these means. It must also remain in consideration that our comprehension of God is passive. The most important faculty of a human being is the faculty of sight. For this, he has been given eyes; however, eyes too cannot see a thing unless they reflect light. The Qur’ān says:

لَا تُنْدِرْ كُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُنْدِرُ الْأَبْصَارَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَيِّرُ (٦٣:١٠)

No eyes can comprehend Him, though He comprehends all eyes. He is subtle and all-knowing. (6:103)

The account of Moses (sws) in which he audaciously requested the Almighty to show Himself to him has been related by the Qur'ān so that man should always remain aware of his limits and limitations and should always remember that even if the Messenger with whom the Almighty spoke was not able to see Him, what to speak of others. The Qur'ān says:

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَى لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَمَهُ رَبُّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرْنِي أَنْظُرْ إِلَيْكَ قَالَ لَنْ تَرَانِي وَلَكِنْ انْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنْ اسْتَقْرَرَ مَكَانُهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَانِي فَلَمَّا تَحَلَّ رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ حَعَلَهُ دَكَّاً وَخَرَّ مُوسَى صَعِقاً فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٧:١٤٣)

And when Moses came at the appointed time and His Lord communicated with him, he [gaining confidence as a result] said: "Lord, reveal Yourself to me that I may see You." He replied: "You shall never see Me; but look upon the mountain in front of you; if it remains intact in its place, then only shall you see Me." And when his Lord revealed Himself to the mountain, He razed it to dust and Moses fell down unconscious. When he recovered, he said: "Glory be to You! I turn to You, and I am the first of the believers." (7:143)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

... the Almighty revealed Himself in this manner to assure Moses (sws) that even mountains are not able to bear the vision of God – mountains which are the most solid and firm structures of this earth; so how can man who is so feeble a structure before these mountains can bear this vision. Man has a limited power of tolerance. His eyes can see light; however, if the intensity of this light exceeds a certain limit his eyes are dazed by it and at times he even loses his sight. Similarly, his ears are able to hear sounds; however, his ears can only hear to a certain extent. If the roar of thunder, for example, exceeds a limit it can shatter his ear-drums. The sun is an essential requirement of man; however, its light and heat are only beneficial to him if the sun remains at a certain distance from him and passes on its light and warmth through many many layers and sieves of the atmosphere. If some day, the sun comes a little near to the earth, all life forms would be burnt down. So when man is such a feeble entity how can he have the strength and ability to see the pure and untainted being of the Almighty who is absolute light and is beyond and above this universe and what is going on in it.¹⁴

14. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 3, 360.

No doubt, believers would be able to see the Almighty on the Day of Judgement. This is evident from the verse: ﴿كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَمْ يَخْجُوُنَّ﴾ (٨٣:١٥) (Certainly not! On that Day, they shall certainly be held away from their Lord, (83:15)).¹⁵ However, there are various levels of seeing the Almighty, and this seeing the Almighty is not tantamount to fully comprehending him. Probably, the nature of this seeing would be that all barriers and impediments shall be withdrawn and people would be able to see the Almighty the way they see the sun, the moon and the stars and in reality this seeing is nothing but observing light reflected from these heavenly bodies. This is the example the Prophet (sws) gave people when they inquired from him about the nature of this observation¹⁶ and said: “You will see Your God in a manner that there will be no obstruction between Him and you except His cloak of greatness.”¹⁷

After this, what remains is observing God through similes and parables. The Qur’ān has used these literary devices to describe Paradise and Hell. A person’s inner-self also adopts a similar method in dreams and in spiritual observations seen while being awake. However, in case of God’s being, even this means is not possible. The reason is that this means can only be employed if the thing which is compared and likened to is found in some form or the other in a person’s imagination or in the world around him. Man has no such data within or outside him regarding God’s being. Thus, this means too can be of no use in this regard. Consequently, the Qur’ān says:

فَلَا تَضْرِبُوا لِلَّهِ الْأَمْثَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٧٤:١٦)

Thus do not compare God because God knows [Himself] and you know not. (16:74)

ii. Attributes

Contrary to the person of God, His attributes can be comprehended to some extent by a human being. The reason is that man himself finds some of these attributes within him, though at a very small scale. God has granted man some portion of His knowledge, power, providence, wisdom and mercy. Man can thus analogously have some idea of the attributes of God. This aspect can also be understood by saying that man’s being is passive in nature. The Qur’ān has used various words for the action which emanates from God to create man’s being: these words are *irādah* (intention), *qawl* (utterance), *mashī’at* (will), *kalimah* (word) and *amr* (state of affairs).¹⁸ The reality of a *shay’* (thing) is this *mashī’at* (intention). A

15. The Qur’ān has stated this regarding the rejecters of the truth. It is evident that the believers will not be deprived of this observation and all obstacles and hindrances to see the Almighty will be withdrawn there.

16. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 782, (no. 4581); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 92-93, (no. 451).

17. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 864, (no. 4878); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 92, (no. 448).

18. The following verse refers to this very reality: إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

shay' (thing) is called a *shay'* because of it.¹⁹ The attributes which manifest in a thing are in reality the attributes of this word. The reality of man's being is also the same. Furthermore, he possesses an awareness of his being and thus is able to comprehend to some extent the attributes of the Maker. However, it is essential for this that a person keep his intellect alive and that he, under the guidance of divine revelation, keep reflecting on the signs of God within him and in the world around him. For this very reason, the Qur'ān has repeatedly called upon its addressees to exercise *ta'aqqul*, *tafakkur* and *tadhakkur*. Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī writes:

The objective of *ta'aqqul* is that a person should neither be guided merely by his desires, impulses and emotions nor should he give himself up to superstitions and myths; on the other hand, he should be guided by the intellect God has bestowed on him and must trust the guidance it provides.

Tafakkūr means that one should prudently deliberate on the decrees and laws of the universe and on the requisites and requirements of human nature, and acknowledge with full sincerity the principles which govern one's life which are derived from these decrees and laws.

Tadhakkur means that the self-evident truths in which a person believes should be remembered by him even during the upheaval in his emotions and desires, and then without any hesitation accept the obvious consequences.²⁰

If one deliberates on one's surroundings and on the world within him, everything bears testimony that God is not merely the first cause and an eternal entity; He is in fact a being who has intention and knowledge and has all noble attributes.

An explanation of this follows:

1. Matter does not have the faculty of intention. It also does not possess any knowledge and intellect. Similarly, the intention and intellect and other potentials of the soul cannot be its own because it is plagued with weakness, short memory and weak will and determination. However, since from both matter and soul, great benefits and remarkable phenomena are produced – which cannot result from a power which is blind and deaf – both are creations and every creation requires a creator:

أَمْ خَلَقُوا مِنْ عَيْرٍ شَيْءٌ أَمْ هُمُ الْخَالِقُونَ أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بَلْ لَا يُؤْفَقُونَ (٥٢: ٣٦-٣٥)

Were they created without a Creator or were they their own creators? Have they created the heavens and the earth? [No] in fact they [in reality] have no

(٨٢:٣٦) (His state of affairs is that when He intends [to do something], He need only say: "Be" and it is. (36:82)).

19. The word *shay'* is *fa'il* from *shā'a yashā'u* and technically the *fa'il* form here connotes the *maf'ül*. (Translator)

20. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tazkiyah-i nafs*, 92.

faith! (52:35-36)

ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ خَالقُ كُلٌّ شَيْءٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَأَنَّى تُوْفَكُونَ (٤٠:٦٢)

Such is God your Lord, the Creator of everything. There is no god but Him. Where then can you turn away from Him. (40:62)

2. This Creator of the Heavens and the earth is self-sufficient and does not need anyone. Thus there is only one cause of creation and that is His intention of mercy. When He desired to bestow His favour, He created this world and blessed His creation with innumerable favours that cannot be counted. Thus just as His name is Allah, it is also Rahmān:

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَمَ الْقُرْآنَ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ عَلَمَهُ الْبَيَانَ الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِخُسْبَانٍ وَالنَّجْمُ وَالشَّجَرُ يَسْجُدُانَ وَالسَّمَاءُ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ إِلَّا تَطْعُوا فِي الْمِيزَانَ وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ وَالْأَرْضُ وَضَعَهَا لِلْأَنَامِ فِيهَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَالنَّخْلُ ذَاتُ الْأَكْمَامِ وَالْحَبْ ذُو الْعَصْفِ وَالرَّيْحَانُ فِي أَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبُانِ (١-٥٥ : ١٣)

It is the Most Gracious who has taught the Qur'ān [because] He created man and taught him articulate speech. [Just look up and observe] the sun and the moon pursue their ordered course. The plants and the trees all bow down in adoration; and He has raised high the sky and set up a balance [in it] that you also do not exceed the balance; and weigh properly with fairness and do not fall short in the balance. And He has laid the earth for His creation. Therein are fruits and sheathed palm-trees, and husked grain of various sort and scented flowers. So which of the majesties of your Lord will ye, O men and jinn, deny? (55:1-13)

3. Knowledge is nothing but the knowledge of hidden potentials; thus every knowledge bears witness to these potentials. If these potentials are not from a being who can perceive and can exercise His will, then they should be mere coercion; however, the organization found in this world and its deep meaningfulness refute this. None of these can be without exercising knowledge and intellect. Thus the Creator is not merely powerful; He is knowledgeable and wise too:

قُلْ أَتَنْكُمْ لَتَكْفُرُونَ بِالذِّي خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَتَجْعَلُونَ لَهُ أَنْدَادًا ذَلِكَ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبَارَكَ فِيهَا وَقَدَرَ فِيهَا أَقْوَاهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ سَوَاءَ لِلسَّائِلِينَ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى إِلَيْهَا وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَئْتِنَا طَائِعِينَ فَقَضَاهُنَّ سَيْنَ سَمَاوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَى فِي كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا وَرَزَّيْنَا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحٍ وَحَفَظَنَا تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ (٤١: ٩-١٢)

Ask them: “Do you disbelieve in Him and associate partners with Him who created the earth in two days? The Lord of the Universe is He. And [after creating the earth] He set up on it mountains towering high above it and placed His blessings upon it and for all the needy according to their needs provided it with sustenance with correct measure – all this in four days. Then He turned towards the sky which was in the form of smoke and He said to it and to the earth: “Obey the directive willingly or unwillingly.” Both said: “We come forth willingly.” Then He made seven heavens in two days and to each heaven He assigned its task. And We decked the lowest heaven with brilliant stars and made it fully secure. All this is the design of the Mighty One, the All-knowing. (41:9-12)

4. The organization and management of the world within us and the one outside is a reality. It cannot be imagined without a being who is living and who can exist for Himself, needing no one for His existence, and is also instrumental in bringing others into existence:

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُنَّهُ سَنَةٌ وَلَا تَوْمُّ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسَعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَقُولُ دُحْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ (٢ : ٢٥٥)

God, there is no god but He, the Living, the Sustainer. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. All that is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him. Who can intercede with Him for someone except by His permission? He knows what lies before them and what is after them and without His will they cannot grasp any part of His knowledge. His dominion prevails in the heavens and the earth, and their protection does not weary Him in the slightest way and He is the Exalted and the Glorious One. (2:255)

5. What is time? It is a concept which emanates from the fact that the Creator, who is living and is self-sustaining, is eternal. Thus, He is the foremost and nothing is before Him. He is the last and there is nothing after Him; He is the apparent and nothing is above Him; He is the hidden and nothing is below Him. He cannot be curtailed in time and space; however, His knowledge encompasses whatever is found in time and space:

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٣ : ٥٧)

He is the first and the last, the apparent and the hidden and He has knowledge of all things. (57:3)

6. Any conception of a being without attributes is mere supposition. Differences in opinion in this regard are nothing in reality and the essence of each opinion is the same. Thus all worthy attributes like creativity, justice, mercy, compassion, knowledge and wisdom are validated as the personal

attributes of God and precede their effect because the cause of everything precedes its effect. Consequently, it is said that even after destruction of this world the grandeur and majesty of God shall continue to exist with full grace:

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ وَيَقِنَّ وَجْهَ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ (٥٥ : ٢٦ - ٢٧)

All that lives on earth is mortal and only the person of Your majestic and glorious God will abide forever. (55:26-27)

7. In understanding the attributes of God, the aspect of finesse in them however should always remain in consideration because power is praiseworthy only when it is complemented by mercy, affection and justice. If anger, revenge, rage and fury manifest against oppression and injustice then it is commendable too. Mercy, forgiveness and generosity are laudable in their right context. The mention of the attribute of *ḥamid* (praiseworthy) with *ghanī* (self-sufficient), *ḥakīm* (wise) with *‘alīm* (knowledgeable) and *ghafūr* (merciful) with *‘azīz* (powerful) in the Qur’ān guides us to this very aspect of finesse and poise:

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سُجْنَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٧ : ١٨٠)

And for God are only good names; call on Him by these names and keep away from those who distort them. And whatever they are doing, they shall soon receive its reward. (7:180)

8. Whatever conception of God one perceives, it cannot be devoid of majesty, splendour and perfection. Consequently, for example, attributes such as al-Wāḥid (the only one), al-Aḥad (the unique) and al-Ṣamad (the rock) depict perfection; the attributes of al-Quddūs (the holy), al-Salām (the one who is peace in entirety) and al-Mu’min (the peace giver) are attributes of splendour and al-Malik (the king), al-‘Azīz (the powerful) and al-Jabbār (the dominant) are attributes of majesty. The attributes of majesty produce fear, respect and praise in a person; the attributes of splendour produce gratitude and love for Him and instil hope in a person. The attributes of majesty are more apparent to his senses and the attributes of splendour are more apparent to his intellect and heart. If God is kept in consideration, the attributes of splendour appear more dominant, and if a human soul is kept in consideration, the attributes of majesty appear dominant. Man while fearing God leaps towards Him for this very reason and tries to seek refuge in His attributes of splendour. In the supplications of the Prophet (sws), the words اللَّهُمَّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ (God! I seek refuge with You from You.)²¹ refer to this very reality. This is the prayer of the person who is overwhelmed with the love of His Lord, is apprehensive of His self-sufficiency and magnificence, is anxious of meeting Him and submits to all His decisions with full regard. When the Qur’ān says that all gracious names are His, it means that every name which depicts His majesty,

21. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 201-202, (no. 1090).

splendour and perfection is gracious and can be given to Him:

قُلْ ادْعُوْ اللَّهَ أَوْ ادْعُوْ الرَّحْمَنَ أَيَا مَا تَدْعُواْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ الْأَسْمَاءَ الْحُسْنَىٰ (١٧:١١٠)

Tell them: “You may call [Him as] Allah or Rahmān; by whatever name you call Him, His are the most gracious names.” (17:110)

Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāḥī, after explaining these aspects in his *Al-Qā’id ilā ‘uyūn al-‘aqā’id*, writes:

... the conception of God in one’s heart should be someone who is kind, merciful, forgiving and compassionate. He smiles and laughs with full sympathy and is gentle. He is the kindest of the kind and the most merciful. He is a person’s support and avenges from his enemies on his behalf. This is because one can attain tranquillity through Him, seek His nearness and is anxious of meeting Him. Then hallowed is He as well and is also an embodiment of the truth. Thus it is logically impossible that He not differentiate between good and evil and that someone who is bad, filthy, unjust, antagonistic, one who forbids good, exceeds limits, is sceptical of the truth and is adamant in opposing the truth attain His nearness. Indeed, He is forgiving and merciful to those who turn to Him and adopt what is good and forsake what is evil, who remember His greatness and majesty so that he can give Him due regard, who keep humbling themselves before Him keeping in mind that He is self-sufficient and does not need any of His creations and is grand in His planning and management. Then in spite of the fact that all His decisions are the very truth and are decked with His relentless mercy, His creations have knowledge of these decisions to a limited extent which is appropriate for them. Thus it is essential that all His decisions be accepted and His servants should be happy and content with all His commands and directives.²²

9. The greatness of the Almighty becomes evident from His attributes of perfection. When a person acquires the correct understanding of these attributes, he professes faith in a God Who is unique, peerless and only one of a kind; He is the rock of shelter for all; to Him solely belong the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them; no one shares His sovereignty and no one is His partner in running the affairs of this universe; there is nothing in this world which is hidden from Him; no affair of this world is beyond His jurisdiction and control; everything needs Him, but He needs no one; matter, plants and animals all prostrate before Him and are busy in celebrating His praises and glorifying Him; His power is immense and He is all-embracing and every particle of this universe is subservient to His will; Whenever He wants, He can destroy any thing at any time and whenever He wants, He can re-create it; it is He who bestows honour or

22. Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāḥī, *Al-Qā’id ilā ‘uyūn al-‘aqā’id*, 1st ed. (Azamgarh: Maktabah al-kawthar, 1975), 43.

humiliation; every thing is mortal and He is the only immortal; He is beyond what is beyond yet He is closer to man than his life-vein; His knowledge and wisdom encompass everything; He even knows what is concealed in the hearts; His intention supersedes all intentions and His command supersedes all commands; He is free of all faults and is without any blemish and beyond any allegation:

سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُحْبِي
وَيُمِيَّتُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلَيْهِمْ هُوَ
الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلْجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا
يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَتَرُّلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ
لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ يُولِجُ اللَّيلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيلِ
وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٥٧:٦-١)

All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to God. He is the Mighty and Wise. To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He only gives life and He only gives death, and He has power over all things. He is the First and the Last, the Apparent and the Hidden and has knowledge of all things. It is He who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then sat on the throne. He knows all that goes into the earth and all that emerges from it and all that comes down from heavens and all that ascends to it. He is with you wherever you are and is aware of whatever you do. He has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth and to Him turn all affairs. He makes the night pass into the day, the day pass into the night and He has knowledge of what is concealed in the hearts. (57:1-6)

10. Among the attributes of perfection, the attribute of *tawhīd* occupies the most importance. It is this attribute of *tawhīd* which is the most explained and emphasized upon by the Qur’ān. So much so, the *sūrah* on which the last group of the Qur’ān effectively ends directs the Prophet (sws) to declare the concept of *tawhīd* openly before the people:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُوْلَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُواً أَحَدٌ (١١٢:٤-١)

Proclaim [O Prophet!]: That God is alone. He is with every one. He is neither anyone’s father nor anyone’s son; and there is none like Him. (112:1-4)

All the efforts of the prophets of God revolve around establishing *tawhīd* in the society. Every single word of its history narrated by the Almighty in the Qur’ān testifies to this reality. Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī writes:

... they are sent in this world so that they can take people out of the servitude of others and make them the servants of God purely. They should consider Him to be their Creator and their king and only serve Him and show their

obedience to Him alone and only trust Him. They should seek help solely from Him. They should thank Him only when they are blessed with favours and seek His help only when in distress. Both in fear and in hope, they should always look up to Him and they should consign themselves to Him. Their love should be subservient to His love and their liking should be subservient to His liking. They should consider Him to be sole and singular as regards His being, His attributes and His rights and in no way should associate any one with Him in these matters whether this associate be an angel, a jinn, a prophet, a saint, any other person or their own selves.²³

It is this importance of *tawhīd* on account of which the Qur'ān has explicitly stated that without adhering to it, no deed of a person is acceptable and if a person adheres to it, then there is hope that every sin may be forgiven. The Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَن يُشْرِكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَمَن يُشْرِكُ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرَ إِنْسَانًا
عَظِيمًا (٤٨:٤)

God will not forgive those who [deliberately] set up partners with Him; lesser than this [sin] however, He will forgive any sin for anyone He [according to His law] wants to. And [in reality], he who associates partners with Him is guilty of a heinous sin. (4:48)

The reason for this is that a person cannot remain persistent on his sin if he professes faith in *tawhīd*, and if he happens to sin, he will find that the grace and blessing of God will induce him to repent and to seek God's forgiveness. Such a person will surely turn to God and as such become entitled to be forgiven before the Day of Judgement. For this very reason, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that a person shall surely be granted Paradise if he adheres to *tawhīd*. The Almighty will not cast such a person in the fire of Hell.²⁴

The argument which nullifies polytheism is that no one has any basis of associating partners with God. At more than one place, the Qur'ān has demanded from its addressees to present if they can any grounds for polytheism whether based on intellect or on divine sources. Only God Himself could have informed us if He had any associates or not and the only way to have knowledge of God's will in this regard were the Divine books He revealed or the traditions and narratives which have been transferred generation after generation from his prophets and messengers. None of these contain anything which substantiates polytheism in any way:

23. Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī, *Haqīqat-i shirk-o tawhīd*, 1st ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1988), 310.

24. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1044-1045, (no. 5967); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 34-35, (nos. 136, 138, 139).

فُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَرْوَنِي مَاذَا حَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرُكٌ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ أَثْنَوْنِي
بِكِتَابٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا أَوْ أَثَارَةً مِّنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٤٦:٤٦)

Ask them: “Have you reflected on those whom you worship besides God? Show me what have they created on this earth or do they have a share in the heavens? Bring me a scripture revealed before this, or some other vestige of divine knowledge, if what you say is true.” (46:4)

Other arguments of *tawhīd* which are cited by the Qur’ān are also very sound and based on established facts derived from knowledge and reason. As examples, we shall present some verses here:

وَإِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهٌ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَآخْلَافِ
اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكَ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ
فَأَكْحِيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ ذَائِبٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ
السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقُلُونَ (٢: ١٦٣ - ١٦٤)

Your God is one God. There is no god but Him. He is the Compassionate, the Ever-Merciful. There is no doubt that in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of night and day and in the ships that sail in the ocean with cargoes beneficial to man and in the water which God sends down from the sky with which He enlivens the earth after its death, dispersing over it all kinds of living beings and in the manifestations caused by the winds, and in the obedient clouds that are between the sky and earth – surely in these there are signs for men of intellect [to understand this reality]. (2:163-164)

Imām Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī writes:

If one reflects on this verse, it becomes evident that it cites parallel, in fact opposing, elements of nature which at the same time display amazing harmony and unity in the overall service which they do for this universe. A perfunctory look at each member of the pairs the verse refers to shows that they are opposite to one another: the heavens and the earth, the night and the day, the ships and the seas. However, a deeper look shows that if from one aspect they seem opposite to one another, then from another they seem to complement one another for the over all benefit and well-being of this universe. Without the sky and its glowing suns and glittering stars, the earth would lose its liveliness and prosperity and in fact would cease to exist. Similarly, without this earth, who can tell, many stars and heavenly bodies would be gravely affected. Similarly, just as our life and that of other living things of this earth is dependent on the light, heat and freshness provided by the day, it is also dependent on the calm, peace and cool of the night. It is both night and day in unison which guarantee life on this earth. Look at the

astounding expanse of seas and oceans around us and the mountainous waves which build up in them and produce awe and dread; however, in spite of such dreadfulness and fright they may cause, how smoothly and slickly do ships and boats glide across them and link the trade, economy, culture, knowledge and technology – in fact every sphere – of various parts of our world.

The next part of the verse mentions rain from the heavens which once again sustains life and vivacity and once again embellishes the surface of the earth with greenery and vegetation. The heavens, one can clearly see are millions of miles away from the earth; yet the two are harmonious with one another and come together to produce all this. Hidden in the earth are treasures of flora and foliage but it is only after the heavens send down rain that this concealed treasure is revealed. Similar is the relationship between clouds and winds. Heaps and mounds of moisture laden clouds stand their ground unless strong winds push them and propel them to various parts which have been fixed for them. It is these winds which thrust them towards north and south and east and west. It is they who make them vanish from the heavens and then make them re-appear on the horizon when they want to.

What then does a deep reflection on all these phenomena lead to? Is this world the battlefield of opposing and conflicting elements in which contrasting and divergent forces always seem to be at logger-heads with one another or does there exist an immensely wise and prudent force which reigns supreme over all these opposing elements and sagaciously uses them to create a systematic order and an over all purpose? Obviously, it is this second conclusion which one reaches after deeply observing this world. On further deliberation, one comes to the conclusion that this world has not come into existence of its own accord and nor the development it has undergone be regarded as automatic. If such was the case how could its conflicting elements have worked in harmony with one another to achieve a higher goal – the harmony and concord which is so evident in every part of this universe.²⁵

The Qur'ān says:

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ مَعَهُ آلهَةٌ كَمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذَا لَا يَتَّقَعُوا إِلَى ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلًا (٤٢:١٧)

Tell [them]: “If, as they claim, there were other gods besides God, they would surely seek to dethrone Him.” (17:42)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

The Idolaters of Arabia considered God to be the sovereign deity analogously on the basis of kings and rulers of this world; they also professed faith in a lot of

25. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 401.

other deities about whom they thought that they had a share in this rule and would be able to procure the nearness of God for those who worship them and would also be able to have the desires and wishes of these worshippers fulfilled. This verse is a refutation of this baseless claim. They are told that if God had partners and associates as they think, then they, at some time or another, would have tried to rebel against Him and overthrow Him and the whole system of this world would have been disrupted. The implication is that the worldly kingdoms and kings, on the basis of which they have analogously set up partners of God, every now and then would get disrupted and geographically altered because of the rebellions and disputes from their courtiers; however, here no one can even point out a single instance in which, for example, the sun left its path or the earth its orbit. In another verse, this aspect is referred to in the following words: (لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلَهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَنْفَسَنَا) (22:21) (were there other gods in the sky and earth besides God, they would have become disrupted, (21:22)).²⁶

At another place, the Qur'ān says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجَبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالدَّوَابُ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنَ النَّاسِ وَكَثِيرٌ حَقٌّ عَلَيْهِ الْعَذَابُ وَمَنْ يُهِنَّ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ مُكْرِمٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ (٢٢:٢٢)

Do you not see that whatever is in the heavens and the earth: the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the beasts, and countless men – all prostrate before God? And there are many on whom punishment has become mandatory and He who is humiliated by God has none to honour him because God does what He intends [according to His law]. (22:18)

Cited here is the argument in favour of *tawhīd* which is testified by every object of this universe by its very existence. We have already alluded to the fact that every object of this universe in its nature has an Abrahamic temperament. The sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains and the animals that tread the earth all follow the divine law on which they have been created. None of them deviates from this law in the slightest manner. The sun whom some foolish people worship bears testimony from its very existence that it stands and bows before the Almighty every day. It raises his head at the time of sunrise and then stands before the Almighty till noon. After midday, it kneels before Him and at sunset prostrates before Him and remains in this state all night. It is to this reality which the waxing and waning of the moon and the rising and setting of stars point. The same is true for the mountains, trees and animals. Their shadows at all times stand, kneel or bow down before the Almighty and a little deliberation shows that such is the Abrahamic temperament of this shadow that it always remains opposite to the sun. If the

26. Ibid., vol. 4, 508.

sun is in the east, the shadow will stretch in the west and vice versa. In other words, the shadow of every object from its very existence tells us that it is not the sun but its Creator who is worthy of prostration.

This argument in favour of *tawhīd* is more of a hint and is seldom grasped by logicians; however, for those who reflect on the universe, this hint has great value.²⁷

iii. Dealings and Practices

The dealings of God with His servants and the manner in which He deals with them are called *sunnatullāh* by the Qur’ān. The Almighty says that these practices are permanent and unalterable. Consequently, for a true comprehension of God, just as knowledge of His attributes is essential, knowledge of His dealings with His creation is also essential. We shall now present the details of these dealings; however, before we do this, it is essential that certain premises remain clear in our mind at the very outset.

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

1. The Almighty has created each person with a noble nature and has blessed him with the ability to discriminate good from evil and has given him the freedom to choose whichever of them he wants to. After that, his becoming a good or a bad person is dependent on his attitude and on the Almighty’s grace. If he tries to adhere to virtue, the Almighty’s grace impels him to virtue and if he adopts evil, the Almighty, if He wants to, leaves him to tread the path of evil.
2. Issues on which the Almighty will hold a person accountable are those in which he has the freedom to choose and exercise his free will. People who do not have this freedom will not be held accountable by Him. This freedom to exercise one’s will has been granted by the Almighty and not something which a person possesses. Thus a person exercises his will while remaining subservient to the will of God. The Almighty, on the basis of His own will and wisdom, may not allow man to achieve what he intends; however, because of some reason which only His wisdom can encompass, if He does not allow a virtuous intention of a person to materialize, He does not deprive him of its reward; similarly, if He does not allow evil intent to materialize, then this does not mean that He will necessarily acquit a person in the Hereafter.
3. Wherever the will of God has been mentioned in the Qur’ān, it only means that except for God Himself no one has the power to stop Him from materializing it or to alter it in any way. It does not mean that His will is not subservient to justice and wisdom. The Almighty is wise and just and nothing that He does is devoid of justice and wisdom. Hence wherever His will is stated in the Qur’ān, it must be considered to be subservient to the wisdom

27. Ibid., vol. 1, 229.

and justice according to which He is running the affairs of this world. It would not be correct to assume that He would act contrarily to whatever practice He has initiated for Himself and to the justice and wisdom He has chosen for Himself. For example, the Qur'ān says that God guides whomsoever He wills and leads astray whomsoever He wills. This statement does not mean that He does not adhere to any principle of justice and wisdom in giving guidance to someone or leading him astray; it only means that giving guidance to someone or leading him astray materializes in accordance with the practice He has set for it and no one has the power to change or break it.

4. In the Qur'ān, we find certain acts being attributed to God; however, the real objective in this regard, as referred to earlier, is not the attribution of these acts, it is their attribution to certain laws and principles on the basis of which these acts materialize. Because these laws and principles have been set by the Almighty, He has attributed the acts which emanate on the basis of these laws and principles to Himself at certain places in the Qur'ān. For example, (فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ (٥٥:٦١)) (and when they deviated [from the truth], God led away their hearts [from the truth], (61:5)) and (وَنَقْلَبُ أَفْدَاهُمْ وَأَبْصَارُهُمْ (١١٠:٦)) (We will turn away their hearts and eyes [from the truth], (6:110)). On such instances, the Qur'ān also refers to the principle on the basis of which a certain act emanates. For example, words such as: "God only leads astray the defiant." These insinuations are meant to direct the attention of the reader on the factual reality so that the apparent meaning of the words does not create any misconception in his mind.

5. The eternal and all embracing knowledge of the Almighty does not negate any of the practices and laws set by Him. Undoubtedly, He knows from the very beginning whether a person will adopt the right path or go astray; however, besides this, He also knows that a person will adopt or reject the right path in accordance with the law of guidance prescribed by Him.²⁸

Two further things should remain clear as well:

Firstly, certain things are attributed to God also because He is the first cause and nothing can originate or materialize without His will and certain things are attributed to us because at times we become worthy of them. The Qur'ān thus says:

وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ حَسَنَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِكُمْ كُلُّ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ فَمَا لَهُؤُلَاءِ الْقَوْمُ لَا يَكَادُونَ يُفْهَمُونَ حَدِيثًا مَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكُمْ وَأَرْسَلْنَاكُمْ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا (٤: ٧٨-٧٩)

And if they receive any benefit, they say: "This is from God." But when evil

28. Ibid., vol. 1, 114.

befalls them, they say: "This was because of you." Tell them: "Everything is from God! [so whatever happens, happens with His permission]." What has come over these men that they are not prepared to understand a word? Whatever good befalls you is from God and whatever affliction comes your way is because of your own selves. [Their real ailment is that they doubt your prophethood; leave them aside] We have sent you forth as a Messenger and sufficient is God's testimony [to this]. (4:78-79)

While explaining these verses, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

... first those people are addressed who were attributing their successes to God and failures to the Prophet (sws). They are told that the actual reality is that both good and evil manifest with the will of God; without His consent nothing can come into being. The difference, however, is that good comes into being as a requisite of God's mercy and evil comes into being because of man's deeds. Viewed thus, evil is related to one's own self.

Here one must keep in consideration that God is an embodiment of good. He has created this world as a manifestation of His mercy. Hence to ascribe any evil to Him is against His noble attributes. Evil comes into being because of a person's ill-use of his free-will. The Almighty has granted a person a certain sphere in which he has the freedom to exercise his will. This freedom is a great favour of the Almighty. It is on its basis that man occupies pre-eminence among other creations. It is on its basis that in the Hereafter, he will be held accountable and rewarded or punished accordingly. In the absence of this freedom, there would have been no difference between a human being and an animal. However, one thing that needs to be kept in consideration regarding this freedom is that it is not unlimited and unrestricted; as referred to before, this freedom is restricted to a certain sphere; and then, within this sphere too, it is subservient to the will and wisdom of the Almighty. Without His will and permission, a person cannot fulfil any of his will and intentions. Good intentions also materialize because of His grace and bad intentions also materialize because of the respite He grants. If the Almighty allows a certain evil intent to materialize, then this is attributed to God because it materialized because of His will and consent; however, from another angle it is an act of a human being because it was a product of his will.

What must further be understood is that whenever the Almighty allows the evil of a person or a group of persons to become rampant in a society then this is because, at a collective level, some benefit or well-being of His creation is intended. At certain instances, giving such opportunity to evil to flourish is to test the righteous so that their weaknesses are done away with and their qualities are polished. At certain other instances, the reason is to leave the wicked with no excuse to deny the truth and to bring to an end their period of

respite. At still other instances, the Almighty creates circumstances so that what is hidden in the nature of people is revealed. Thus not only righteous deeds emanate from them as a result but evil deeds also emanate from people who have them hidden in themselves.²⁹

Secondly, the basis of the directive of good and evil, and right and wrong is that what is in accordance with the attributes of God and what is against them. We praise justice because justice is an attribute of God and for this reason its liking has been ordained in our nature. No doubt, this directive is relative as such but is also eternal because the attributes of God are eternal. Furthermore, there is no clash or conflict between these attributes so that the Almighty on one occasion wills something which is in accordance with His attributes and at another wills something else which is in conflict with them. In all circumstances, He fully adheres to justice:

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمٍ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ
(١٨:٣)

God bears witness that there is no god but He, and so do the angels and people [in this world] who have true knowledge. He is fully adherent to justice; there is no other God; [He is] the Mighty, the Wise. (3:18)

Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī writes:

... the reference that God is adherent to justice is a very important constituent of faith and so close it is to the essence of Islam that one can say that it is in fact Islam. The importance it occupies requires that some points delineated by my mentor Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāḥī in this regard be stated here so that people who intend to deliberate on the philosophy and wisdom of religion are able to benefit from them:

1. The word *īmān* originates from the verbal noun *amn*. This, in other words, means that believing in something and adhering to it is ingrained in the very nature of *īmān*. As an obvious consequence of this, it is essential that a person must have a deep conviction on the existence of God. However, this conviction can only be achieved if a person believes that intellect is primarily meant to guide him and not to misguide him. It should be accepted, in other words, that intellect by its nature is a barometer of justice within a person. This premise necessarily leads to another conclusion: human nature is created by the Almighty on the principles of justice and equity. The reason for this is that the Almighty being an embodiment of justice and equity holds justice and equity very dear and is also One who wants to establish justice and equity everywhere. All these conclusions are a logical consequence and are in fact

29. Ibid., vol. 2, 344.

self-evident. It is evident from this discussion that one cannot verify the veracity of something unless the Creator is regarded to be an embodiment of truth and justice. From this fact, all the actions and deeds which emanate from God are regarded to be just and the way this fact is validated through intellect, it is also validated through universal truths. An explanation of this compact premise is that the Almighty has ingrained piety in human nature and made hearts inclined to relish and accept it. In such a situation, how is it possible for us that we like piety and not regard God as someone who likes piety. How can we regard our liking for the truth to be true if we are not satisfied with the liking for the truth of our Creator. We want to please Him by doing a good deed because we are satisfied that He is pleased by a good deed. We ascribe good attributes to Him because in liking these attributes we are fully convinced of the veracity of our nature.

2. The foundation of faith is love for God. We profess faith in a being whom we love, whom we want to please and from whom we have high hopes and expectations. This is not possible unless we are certain that it is absolutely impossible that He be unjust and oppressive. He will grant His favours to those who will obey Him and punish only those who are worthy of punishment. It is against human nature to love an unjust and oppressive master.

3. If one deliberates on the favours and blessings of the Almighty, the foundation of the requirement of professing faith in the Almighty which emerges in human nature is gratitude. This gratitude becomes mandatory when one accepts that it is the right of the Creator Who has bestowed these favours on us and a requisite of these favours. It is this very reality on the basis of which the Qur'ān has called *shirk* (polytheism) as *zulm* (injustice) and *īmān* as gratitude. Owing to this very reason, the basis of a person demanding his rights is necessity of justice. This is a self-evident reality of *sharī'ah* and law. On these very grounds, the basis of every *sharī'ah* is justice and fairness.

4. The consequence of faith is obedience to God and the consequence of obedience to God is the pleasure of God. In every deed and act which is done, there is a similar relationship of causation which the Almighty has established through His commands and directives and has guided us in various ways towards it, and since we have full conviction on these results of deeds, hence while relying on His promises we obey Him. If we do not have faith on the fact that God honours His promises, all basis of deeds will be razed to ground and all reliance will remain on either of the following two things: like the Christians on the false notion of intercession, which totally depends on Christ, whom they worship as a deity and love more than God Himself or like the Jews on their deviation from the truth and their short-sightedness: they abandoned their ship to the winds and because of their arrogance and pride did not remain content with the judgement of God as if to them there was no principle before God to discriminate good from evil. To protect oneself from going astray in this

manner, it is essential that one has full conviction that God adheres to justice and every directive and promise of His is true, as specified by the Qur'ān: (وَنَعَّلَتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صَدِقًا وَعَدْلًا (٦:١١٥))³⁰ (fulfilled was the word of your Lord in truth and in justice, (6:115)).

Following are the *sunan* (practices and dealings) of God:

(1) Tests and Trials

God has created this world for trial and test. Every single person on this earth faces these trials and as such His practice of putting mankind through trials is a universal phenomenon. Whatever is ingrained in human nature comes to surface because of these trials; the secrets of the inner personality of a person are revealed through these very trials and the levels attained by a person in his ideologies and in his deeds are ascertained through these very trials. The Qur'ān says that life and death have been created for the very purpose of judging that who among mankind adopts a rebellious attitude towards his Creator and who leads a life according to the liking of his Creator. No doubt, the Almighty has knowledge of everything; however, He has set the practice for Himself that He does not merely reward and punish people on the basis of His knowledge; on the contrary, He does so on the basis of their deeds. For this very purpose, He has implemented the system of trial on this earth:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَنْهَا كُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلاً، وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ (٦٧: ٢)

[He] Who created death and life that He might test you as to which of you is best regarding deeds. And He is also Mighty and Forgiving. (67:2)

The circumstances of sorrow and happiness, poverty and affluence, grief and joy which befall a person in this world are governed by this very practice of God. Through such circumstances, the Almighty tests His servants and differentiates the good among them from the evil. When He blesses someone with affluence and status, He tests whether such people will remain grateful to Him or not, and when He afflicts someone with poverty and hardships, He tests whether such people will remain patient or not:

وَنَبْلُو كُمْ بِالشَّرِّ وَالْحَيْرِ فِتْنَةً وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ (٣٥: ٢١)

And We are inflicting you with sorrow and happiness to test you, and to Us shall you return. (21:35)

Writes Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī:

... He gives wealth and status to some people to see if they become grateful, humble and obedient on this favour or end up proud and arrogant, pompous

30. Ibid., vol. 2, 55.

and conceited and ill-treat the poor and do not spend on others from what God has blessed them with. Similarly, He deprives some people of wealth to see if they remain patient in such circumstances, are thankful for what they have, are satisfied with their fate and remain honourable in their hardships or in frustration and disappointment end up in despair and dejection, show discontent on their fate, become angry with God and live a life of misery as a result.³¹

All these facilities and provisions with which this earth is endowed with are meant to test man. These provisions, in other words, are not provided to him for his indulgence and pleasure; they are a means to try him. By providing them to man, the Almighty is judging whether a person seeks the comprehension of His Creator and in this way attains success in the Hereafter or loses his way by indulging in them:

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَّهَا لِنَبْلُوْهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا (١٨:٧)

We have decked the earth with whatever is in it so We can test them that who is the best regarding his deeds. (18:7)

Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī writes:

... this world is a place of trial and test. In it, God is testing that who while using his intellect and brains seeks the Hereafter, and who while following his desires ends up seeking this world. For the purpose of test, God has adorned the face of this earth with make-up that is deceptively pleasing to the eye. There is great lure and attraction in wealth and children, in orchards and gardens, in fields and crops, in cars and villas, in buildings and castles, in positions of high social and political status of this world. All its pleasures are at hand and easy to attain while its pangs are hidden. On the other hand, all the successes of the Hereafter are as yet concealed from the eyes, and those who seek them are immediately faced with a lot of hardships in this world. Indeed this is a severe trial. Not every slave to his passions can come through it. Only those will sail through it who are perspicacious enough not to be misled from these worldly lures which may attempt to deceive them in one guise or another and are never prepared to lose the favours of the Hereafter by getting caught in the lures and attractions of this world.³²

These are the details of the law of trial and test that is generally faced by human beings. A specific form of this law comes into play in the times of the *rusul* (messengers) of God. At the behest of the Almighty, their propagation culminates in the worldly Judgement of their addressees and those who claim to profess faith in these messengers are, during the course of this propagation, put

31. Ibid., vol. 3, 60.

32. Ibid., vol. 4, 558.

through certain trials and tests which are generally not faced by others. Consequently, the Qur'ān says:

أَحَسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ (٢٩ : ٣-٢)

Do people think that once they say: "We believe [in the *rasūl*]," they will be left alone and not be tried even though We [similarly] tried those who lived before them. So God will surely set apart the truthful, and He will also surely set apart the liars. (29:2-3)

Once the messengers of God communicate the truth to their addressees to the extent that they are left with no excuse to deny it, this test manifests itself to isolate and separate the believers from the disbelievers before the latter are punished. The words: (فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ (٢ : ٢٩) (so God will surely set apart the truthful, and He will also surely set apart the liars) of the above quoted verse refer to this very reality. The implication is that before the judgement is delivered it is clearly known where each person stands. At certain other places in the Qur'ān too, this law and practice of God is mentioned with similar emphasis:

وَلَنَبْلُوكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالشَّمَراتِ وَبَشِّرُ الصَّابِرِينَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعونَ (٢ : ١٥٦ - ١٥٥)

And We shall test you with some fear and some famine and some loss of property and life and some loss in produce [from the fields]. And [O Prophet!] Give glad tidings [of success in this world and in that to come] to those who persevere [in this cause]. [Those] who when afflicted with some calamity say: "We belong to God, and to Him [one day] we shall return." (2:155-156)

(2) Guidance and Error

In this trial, man has been asked to guard himself from going astray and consciously adopt the guided path. The Qur'ān has informed us that this guidance is found in the very nature of a person. Moreover, once a person attains the age of intellectual maturity, the signs of the heavens and the earth around him direct his attention to this guidance. If a person values and treasures this guidance and benefits from it and is grateful to his Lord for it, it is the practice and law of God that He increases the glow of this guidance and creates in a person a further desire for this guidance, and as a result of this induces in him the urge to benefit from the guidance brought by the prophets of God:

نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ نُورٌ مَّن يَشَاءُ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٢٤ : ٣٥)

Light upon light. God guides to His light whom He wills. [This is a parable] and God cites parables to mankind [for their guidance], and God has knowledge of all things. (24:35)

وَالَّذِينَ اهْتَدُوا زَادُهُمْ هُدًى وَآتَاهُمْ تَقْوًا هُمْ (٤٧: ١٧)

And those who are guided, He will increase their guidance and also grant them their share of piety. (47:17)

This can be called culmination of guidance and the Qur'ān has stated with full clarity that without the will of God, even a desire for obtaining it is not produced in a person. This will of God is also related to this law of guidance of His. God is aware of everything and is also wise: He gives this favour to only those who accept the guidance ingrained in their nature:

إِنَّ هَذِهِ تَذْكِرَةٌ فَمَنْ شَاءَ اتَّخَذَ إِلَيْ رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْمًا حِكْمَيًا يُدْخِلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ وَالظَّالِمِينَ أَعْدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (٢٩-٣١: ٧٦)

This [Qur'ān] is only a reminder. So whoever wishes should take the path leading to Allah and you do not wish [O People!] until Allah so wishes [according to His law]. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, Wise. He admits into His mercy whomever He wishes [on the basis of this knowledge and wisdom]. And for the wrongdoers, He has prepared a grievous punishment. (76:29-31)

If a person decides upon evading this ingrained guidance, refuses to use his intellect, and deliberately deviates from the truth, then in the words of the Qur'ān this is *zulm* (wronging the soul) and *fisq* (defiance), and the Almighty never guides a person who continues to wrong his soul and persists in defiance and He leaves him to wander in the darkness of error and misguidance:

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَجْعَلُ الرَّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ (١٠٠: ١٠)

And it is not possible for anyone to profess faith [in the Prophet] except by God's permission. [This permission is only granted to those who use their intellect] and those who do not use their intellect, He puts on them the dirt of [error and misguidance]. (10:100)

The consequence of such behaviour is that the obduracy, stubbornness and selfishness of such wrong-doers increase and they are deprived of the ability to think and understand in the right way. A state reaches when the Almighty seals their hearts in retribution of this wrong behaviour:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَنْذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَيْصَارِهِمْ غِشاوةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (٢: ٦-٧)

Those who have decided to reject [this Book], it is the same to them whether you warn them or not; they will not believe. Allah has [now] set a seal on their hearts and on their ears [in accordance with His law], and on their eyes is a veil and great is the penalty that awaits them [on the Day of Judgment.]

(2:6-7)

At another place, the words are:

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ جَاءَنَّهُمْ آيَةً لَّيُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَا يُشَعِّرُكُمْ أَنَّهَا إِذَا جَاءَتْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ وَنُقْلِبُ أَفْنَدَتُهُمْ وَأَبْصَارَهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَنَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُعْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ (٦:١٠٩ - ١١٠)

And these people keep solemnly swearing by God that if a sign comes, they will definitely believe in it. Tell them: "Signs are with God" and how will you know that even if signs come they will not believe and [in retribution of this sin] We will turn away their hearts and eyes [from the truth] since they refused to express belief at first and We will let them wander about in their wrongdoing. (6:109-110)

Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī writes:

... this is a mention of the practice of God according to which some are blessed with faith and some deprived of it ... people who deliberate on the innumerable signs which are found in this world and in the world within their own selves and with their heart and soul adhere to the obvious consequences of this deliberation are blessed with faith. On the other hand, people who in spite of witnessing all these signs turn deaf and blind to them and take to narcissism and remain caught up in their desires and do not open their eyes even after persistent reminders by the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws), their hearts and eyes are turned away from the truth by the Almighty as a result of which they are deprived of the correct vision and understanding. After this, the greatest of signs and miracles have no effect on them. The practice of God is that the hearts and thoughts of people who instead of looking straight and walking in the right direction look crookedly and walk in the wrong direction are rendered warped and crooked. The Qur'ānic verse: (فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ (٦١:٦١)) (and when they deviated [from the truth], God led away their hearts [from the truth], (61:5)) points to this very practice of the Almighty. Here, in the verse under discussion, while referring to this practice of God, Muslims are prodded that how do they believe that if such people according to their demand are shown a miracle they will become believers. If so, many signs which exist in the world around man and in that within him and towards which the Qur'ān has pointed and explained their implications have failed to convince their hearts and set right their vision? How can another sign change and convince them? How can the veil which stretches across their vision today be lifted tomorrow and how can the blindness in them which today stops them from seeing such signs go away when a new sign is shown to them? The way they have been belying all signs throughout their lives will only make them belie another sign and the metamorphosis which

you see today in their hearts and eyes will play its role tomorrow also when they witness the sign.³³

(3) Beyond-Capacity Directives

The Almighty never gives a directive to human beings in the *shari‘ah* revealed by Him which is beyond their capacity. In all that emanates from God for human beings, it is always made sure that they are not burdened beyond what they can bear and whatever directive be given is given keeping in view human capacity and capability. Consequently, a person will not be held liable for sins done out of forgetfulness or misunderstanding or done inadvertently, and God’s only requirement of man is that he should follow His directives in both form and spirit with full veracity and honesty. Verses such as (٢٨٦ : ٢) (God does not burden a person beyond his capacity, (2:286)) and other similar ones mention this very practice of God. However, this does not mean that if people adopt a rebellious behaviour, then too the Almighty does not burden them beyond their capacity. It is evident from the Qur’ān that for reprimand and training³⁴ or for punishment³⁵ or to show them the consequences of their evil deeds³⁶ or to make them aware of their helplessness against the power of God,³⁷ people are certainly burdened beyond their means.

(4) Rise and Fall of Nations

Under the law of trial which has been mentioned earlier, just as God selects people to make them undergo a trial of patience or of gratitude, in a similar manner He also selects nations for this purpose. As a result of this selection, when a nation once rises among the comity of nations, the practice of God with it is that He keeps it on this position until it itself plunges into lowliness with regard to morality and knowledge. This is an unchangeable practice of God and when, after repeated warnings, He decides to humiliate and depose a nation no one can stop Him and no power of this world can help that nation against the Almighty. The whole history of mankind bears witness to this practice of God:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُعِيرُ مَا يَقُومُ حَتَّىٰ يُعِيرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَ لَهُ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَالٌ (١١:١٣)

God does not change His dealing with a people unless they themselves change their characteristics, and when God decides to afflict them with a misfortune, none can ward it off. And for such people there is none who can help them against God. (13:11)

33. Ibid., vol. 3, 140.

34. In the verse (2:286) just quoted, the subsequent words are: “Lord! Do not lay on us a burden such as You Laid on those before us.”

35. This is a very common subject of the Qur’ān and can be seen at various places.

36. The Qur’ān, 68:42; 4:100.

37. The Qur’ān, 2:24.

Consequently, the Qur'ān has said that this phenomenon of rise and fall shall happen with every nation of this world, and as a result some of these nations would be destroyed and others inflicted with great punishment. History tells us that first the Hamites and then the Semites were selected for this purpose and for the past five hundred years, the progeny of Japheth have been chosen for this purpose. These are last peoples on which history will be ending. The Qur'ān says that after this the Day of Judgement shall come:

وَإِنْ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا نَحْنُ مُهْلِكُوهَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ أَوْ مُعَذَّبُوهَا عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا كَانَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ
مَسْتُورًا (٥٨:١٧)

And there is no nation which We shall not destroy or sternly punish before the Day of Judgement. That is decreed in the Book of God. (17:58)

(5) Divine Help

When the Almighty entrusts a person or a group with any of His missions and asks them to achieve it, then He also provides His help to them. This mission can relate to propagation of His message and it can also relate to *jihād* and warfare. Many verses such as (كَانَ حَقًّا عَلَيْنَا نَصْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٤٧ :٣٠)) (helping the believers is incumbent upon Us, (30:47)) clearly say that the Almighty has held it mandatory on Himself to help the believers who have taken up such a mission:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ تَصْرُّفَ اللَّهِ يَصْرُّكُمْ وَيُثْبِتُ أَقْدَامَكُمْ (٤٧:٤٧)

Believers! If you help God, God will help you and strengthen you. (47:7)

This help does not come randomly. It is based on a rule and it comes in accordance with it. Its details are given in a forthcoming chapter of this book: *The Sharī'ah of Jihād*. However, here this much should remain clear that what makes a person worthy of help is perseverance and piety. The Qur'ān says that when in the battle of Uhud the Prophet (sws) in order to raise the morale of his people told them that the Almighty will help them with three thousand angels, the Almighty endorsed his proposal and out of His grace even increased this number by two thousand; however, at this instance, the Almighty clearly said that the promise of this help is dependent on the condition that Muslims should show perseverance and abstain from showing disobedience to God and His Prophet (sws):

بَلَى إِنْ تَصْرِرُوا وَتَتَقَوَّلُو وَيَأْتُوكُمْ مِنْ فَوْرِهِمْ هَذَا يُمْدِدُكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ آلَافٍ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ
مُسَوِّمِينَ (١٢٥:٣)

Yes! If you persevere and are fearful of God, and your enemies launch an attack on you at this very moment, God will help you with five thousand angels who will be marked with specific signs. (3:125)

(6) Remorse and Repentance

If a person commits a sin, there exists a chance for him to repent. The Almighty has asserted (The Qur'ān, 6:54) that He has made mercy incumbent upon Himself, and therefore He never punishes people who after sinning repent and mend their ways. In this regard, the rule is that if people repent immediately after they commit a sin the Almighty definitely forgives them; however, He does not forgive people who deeply indulge in sin all their lives and when they see death approaching start to repent and seek forgiveness from the Almighty. Similarly, He also does not forgive people who deliberately deny the truth if they continue on this denial till death. This practice of God regarding repentance has been mentioned in the Qur'ān in the following words:

إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُونَ مِنْ قَرِيبٍ فَأُولَئِكَ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ حَكِيمًا وَيَسِّرَ التَّوْبَةَ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدُهُمُ الْمَوْتَ قَالَ
إِنِّي بَيْتُ الْآنَ وَلَا الَّذِينَ يَمْوُلُونَ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ أُولَئِكَ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (٤: ١٧-١٨)

God's responsibility is to forgive only those who commit a sin while being overwhelmed with emotions and then quickly repent. It is they who are forgiven by God. God is all-knowing and wise. But He will not forgive those who sin all their lives and, when death comes to them, say: "Now I repent!" nor those who die as disbelievers. It is for these whom We have prepared a grievous punishment. (4:17-18)

(7) Reward and Punishment

In the Hereafter, reward and punishment is a certain reality; however, it is evident from the Qur'ān that at times this reward and punishment also takes place in this world. This lesser judgement is a prelude to the greater judgement which will take place in the Hereafter. The various forms of this reward and punishment which the Almighty has spelled out in the Qur'ān are:

Firstly, people who are only after this world, live and die for it and are absolutely indifferent to the Hereafter are given whatever worldly benefits the Almighty wants to give them, and then their account is settled by Him in this very world and they are rewarded or punished right in this world on the basis of their deeds:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَرِزْقَهَا لَوْفٌ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يُخْسِنُونَ (١١: ١٥)

We recompense in this world the deeds of those who desire the life of this world with all its finery, and they are not given less in it in any way. (11:15)

Secondly, those who reject their respective *rasūl* (messenger) even after being communicated the truth to the extent that they are left with no excuse to deny it are punished in this very world and those who profess faith in him are embraced by the blessings of God from all sides:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٤٧:١٠)

And for each nation, there is a *rasūl*. Then when a *rasūl* comes to a nation, their matter is decided with justice and they are not wronged. (10:47)

This is an unchangeable practice of God. The accounts of the people of Noah (sws), Lot (sws), Shu'ayb (sws), Hūd (sws) and Sālih (sws) besides those of other prophets which have been narrated in the Qur'ān are a tale of the lesser days of judgement that took place in this world. In human history, such a lesser day of judgement was set up for the last time for the people of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws):

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِنْ نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا أَخْدَنَا أَهْلَهَا بِالْبُلْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَصْرَعُونَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلْنَا مَكَانَ السَّيِّئَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ حَتَّى عَفَوْا وَقَالُوا فَدْ مَسَّ آبَاءَنَا الضَّرَاءِ وَالسَّرَّاءِ فَأَخْدَنَا هُمْ بَعْثَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرْيَى آمَنُوا وَأَتَقْوَا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَرَكَاتٍ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَكِنْ كَذَّبُوا فَأَخْدَنَا هُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٩٦-٩٤:٧)

And whenever We sent a prophet as a messenger to any city We tested its people with hardships which were financial and which afflicted their persons so that they adopt humility in their supplications. Then We changed their adversity to good fortune so that when they had prospered a lot they said: "Good and bad days also befell our fore-fathers." At last we seized them suddenly and they were caught unaware. And had the people of these cities professed faith and remained God-fearing, We would have showered upon them blessings from the heavens and the earth. But they rejected, and We seized them in retribution of their misdeeds. (7:94-96)

Thirdly, the Almighty has promised the progeny of Abraham (sws) that if they adhere to the truth, they will lead all nations of the world and if they deviate from it, they will be deposed from this position and will have to face the punishment of humiliation and subjugation. The words (٤٠ : ٢) (keep my covenant, and I will keep yours, (2:40)) refer to this very covenant of the Almighty with the Israelites. The warning sounded in the words (٨ : ١٧) (if you do it again, We would also do it again, (17:8)) also refers to this. All the books of the Bible mention the details of this covenant.

وَإِذْ أَبْتَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِلَيْيَ جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّيِّي قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ (٢ : ١٢٤)

And recall when Abraham was put to trial by His Lord in a few things and he fulfilled them. He said: "I have decided to appoint you the leader of mankind." "And what of my descendants?" asked Abraham. He replied: "My covenant does not apply to the evil-doers." (2:124)

It is this very promise of the Almighty which is specifically mentioned for the Israelites in the following verse:

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ أَقَامُوا التَّورَاةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ لَا كُلُّهُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ
مِّنْهُمْ هُنَّ أَمَّةٌ مُّفْتَصِدَةٌ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ سَاءَ مَا يَعْمَلُونَ (٦٦:٥)

And if they adhered to the Torah and the Gospel and that what has been revealed to them from their Lord, they would have received the sustenance [of their Lord] from above them and from beneath their feet. [No doubt], there is one group among them who is righteous but those whose deeds are evil abound. (5:66)

It is recorded in Deuteronomy (28:1-25):

If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God: You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country ... The Lord will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven ... Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you ... The Lord will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the Lord your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom ... However, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country ... The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven, and you will become a thing of horror to all the kingdoms on earth. (Deuteronomy 28:1-25)

2. Belief in the Angels

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولَئِيْ أَجْنِحةٍ مُّشَنِّيْ وَثَلَاثَ وَرَبَاعَ يُزِيدُ
فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (١:٣٥)

Gratitude is for God only, Creator of the heavens and the earth, He who has made the angels as messengers, with two, three or four wings. He increases His creation according to His will. Indeed, God has power over all things. (35:1)

The beings through whom the Almighty sends down His directives for His creation are called angels. The Qur'aan uses the word *الملائكة* (*al-malā'ikah*) for

them, which is a plural of the word مَلَك (malak), and the word مَلَك (malak) itself has sprung from مَلَّاْك (mal'āk). The word means “a messenger”. In the above quoted verses, the Qur'ān itself has alluded to the fact that the word *malā'ikah* has been chosen for them to connote this very meaning. Consequently, it is evident from the Qur'ān that it is through the angels that communication between this world and the one beyond it is established, and the Almighty is running the affairs of this world through them. The way this is done is that whatever directive they receive from the Almighty is implemented by them as His obedient subordinates. Their own intention or exercise of authority is not involved in this process in any way. They are an embodiment of obedience and are busy all the time in glorifying Him and in celebrating His praises and never disobey Him in the slightest of way:

وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكِبُرُونَ يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَعْلُمُونَ مَا يُؤْمِرُونَ (١٦ : ٤٩ - ٥٠)

And they are not defiant to the slightest and fear their Lord, Who is above them and do exactly as they are bidden. (16:49-50)

While explaining the reasons for which man has been asked to profess belief in the angels, Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī writes:

... an inseparable part of faith in divine books and in prophets is faith in the angels. Without believing in the angels, the channel between God and His prophets is rendered ambiguous and unclear. This ambiguity not only conceals an important step in the means of communicating guidance and knowledge, but is also responsible in leading mankind astray in matters of divine guidance. Mankind has always acknowledged that there is a God and has also conceded that if there is a God, then He should inform them of His likings; however, when He does not come before us face to face and we are not able to directly view Him, then the question arises about the means through which He communicates His guidance and directives to His creatures. If for this purpose, He selects certain outstanding individuals, who are called prophets and messengers, then the same question also arises about them: How does He communicate His directives to them? Does He come face to face with them or adopts some means for this purpose? The answer to this question is that the means through which God communicates with His creation is *wahī* (divine revelation), which He sends down through His angels, in particular, the exalted angel, Gabriel. These angels are the noblest and most superior of God's creatures. They have the ability to directly acquire *wahī* from the Almighty ... it is because of this strong connection of the angels with prophets and divine revelation that in order to profess faith in the prophets of God and in His books, it is essential that faith be professed in them as well. They are entrusted with the responsibility of communicating between God and His prophets and messengers and viewed thus they are essential as they are the only creatures which are able to have equal communication with both

this world and the one beyond it. Because they are made from light, they are able to bear the glow and radiance of God and because they have been created, they are also able to maintain communication with human beings. Except for them, no creature can attain this level of nearness with the Almighty. Hence it was deemed necessary that besides professing faith in prophets and messengers, faith should also be professed in messengers who can mediate and communicate between God and His messengers.³⁸

The responsibilities of the angels which the Almighty has mentioned in the Qur’ān are the following:

1. They implement the directives of God among His creation:

تَنْزَلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ (٩٧: ٤)

In that [night], descend the angels and the Spirit by the permission of their Lord with commands in all affairs. (97:4)

2. Just as they descend with the directives of God, they also ascend upwards to be in the presence of God:

تَعْرُجُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةً (٧٠: ٤)

The angels and the Spirit ascend towards Him in a Day the measure of which [according to your calculation] is fifty thousand years. (70:4)

3. They reveal the messages of God to His prophets:

يُنَزَّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ بِالرُّوحِ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ أَنْ أَنذِرُوا أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاقْتُلُونِ (٢٦: ١٦)

He sends down the angels with the revelation of His directive to those among His servants whom He chooses to warn people: “There is no god but Me: therefore fear Me.” (16:2)

It is evident from the Qur’ān that it is generally Gabriel who brings down the revelations. He occupies the highest status among the angels and is the most favoured one as well. He can directly access the Almighty, and no one can come between him and the Almighty. The Qur’ān has also called him powerful, trustworthy and one who is obeyed. This means that he is fully capable and able to carry out all responsibilities entrusted to him. Hence, there is no possibility that any other power or evil spirit influence or over-awe him or convince him to betray God or that he himself mix up or make mistakes in the revelations given to him. He has been safeguarded from all these shortcomings by the Almighty. The Qur’ān says:

38. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 1, 423.

عَلَمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَىٰ ذُو مَرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَىٰ وَهُوَ بِالْأَفْقِ الْأَعْلَىٰ ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّىٰ فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسِينَ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ (٥٣: ٥-١٠)

He is taught by one who is powerful and mighty. He stood on the uppermost horizon; then, drawing near, he came down within two bows' length or even closer, and revealed to his servant that which he revealed. (53:5-10)

4. They write down and preserve the words and deeds of human beings:

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحَافِظِينَ كَرَامًا كَاتِبِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ (٨٢: ١٠-١٢)

Whereas appointed over you are guardians, noble scribes. They know what you do. (82:10-12)

5. They descend with glad tidings and punishment for people:

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبَشْرَىٰ قَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ سَلَامٌ فَمَا لَبِثَ أَنْ جَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ حَيْدَ فَلَمَّا رَأَى أَيْدِيهِمْ لَا تَصِلُّ إِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ وَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ حِيفَةً قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَيْ قَوْمٍ لُوطٍ (٦٩: ١١-٧٠)

And our messengers came to Abraham with glad tidings. They said: "Peace be to you!" Abraham answered: "Peace be to you too!" Soon he brought them a roasted calf [to serve them]. But when he saw their hands being withheld from it, he felt strange and a little afraid of them. They said: "Have no fear; we have been sent forth to the people of Lot [to mete out punishment to them]." (11:69-70)

Another thing which is incidentally evident from the above verses is that angels can assume the form of human beings and in spite of this do not require food for their sustenance and are free from such wants.

6. They remain busy in glorifying and exalting the Lord and pray to Him for the forgiveness of those who inhabit the earth:

وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِمَنِ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَلَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (٤٢: ٥)

And the angels give glory to their Lord, celebrating His praises and seek forgiveness [from Him] for those on earth. Pay heed! Surely it is God Who is the Forgiving One, the Merciful. (42:5)

7. They claim the souls of people:

قُلْ يَتَوَفَّ أَكُمْ مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِلَّ بِكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْحَجُونَ (٣٢: ١١)

Say: "The angel of death in charge of you will claim your souls. Then to your

Lord shall you be returned.” (32:11)

8. They are the companions of the faithful both in this world and in the Hereafter and give them glad tidings of Paradise at their death:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَشَرَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ إِلَّا تَخَافُو وَلَا تَحْزُنُو وَأَبْشِرُو بِالْجَنَّةِ
الَّتِي كُتُبْتُمْ ثُوَدُونَ تَحْنُنُ أَوْلِيَاؤُكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَشَتَّمُونَ أَنْفُسُكُمْ
وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَدَعُونَ (٤١:٣١-٣٠)

As for those who said: “Our Lord is God,” and remained steadfast on this, angles will descend to them [with the glad tidings]: “Fear not and grieve not and accept the glad tidings of the Paradise you used to be promised of. We were your companions in this world and [now] we are also your companions in the Hereafter. And here you shall be given everything you desire and everything that you ask for.” (41:30-31)

9. In the Hereafter, they shall be in the presence of God and shall be carrying His throne:

وَتَرَى الْمَلَائِكَةَ حَافِنَ مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ (٧٥:٣٩)

And you shall see the angels encircling the throne, glorifying and celebrating the praises of their Lord. (39:75)

وَالْمَلَكُ عَلَى أَرْجَانِهَا وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمَانِيَةٌ (٦٩:١٧)

And the angels will be at its borders and eight of them will on that Day bear the throne of your Lord over them. (69:17)

10. They shall be in charge of Hell:

عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شَدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمِرُونَ (٦٦:٦٦)

It [-Hell-] will be in the charge of stern and mighty angels who never disobey what God commands them and do exactly as they are directed. (66:6)

It is implicitly evident from the Qur’ān that the angels shall also be in charge of Paradise and its affairs.

Besides referring to these obligations and responsibilities, the Qur’ān has at several places negated the various erroneous concepts people had formed about them. Consequently, it was clarified that angels are not the daughters of God the way these foolish deem them to be; in fact, the angels are the near ones of God. They have attained this nearness not because they are able to have their way with God by influencing or cajoling Him but because they conform to every standard of serving and obeying Him. They cannot even take the initiative in conversing with Him unless He allows them to – what to speak of having their way with Him

in such a manner. Then whatever they are asked, they reply with all due respect and always speak the truth. They can neither intercede for someone nor take any step on their own; on the contrary, they always await the directives of God and tremble with His fear:

قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا سُّجَّانَةً بِلْ عَبَادٌ مُكْرَمُونَ لَا يَسْبُقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ يَعْلَمُ
مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ إِلَى لِمَنِ ارْتَضَى وَهُمْ مِنْ خَشْيَتِهِ مُشْفَقُونَ وَمَنْ يَقُلُّ
مِنْهُمْ إِنَّى إِلَهٌ مِنْ دُونِهِ فَذَلِكَ تَجْزِيَهُ جَهَنَّمَ كَذَلِكَ تَجْزِي الطَّالِمِينَ (٢١: ٢٦-٢٩)

They say: “The Merciful has children.” [Certainly not] He is above this! In fact [these angels] are but His honoured servants. They never take the initiative in speaking to Him and in all circumstances obey His command. He knows everything what is before them and what is behind them and they do not intercede for anyone save those whom He accepts, and tremble in awe of Him. And whoever of them says: “I am also a god besides God,” So We shall punish Him with Hell. Thus do We reward the wrongdoers. (21:26-29)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

... human intellect has always been curious about the spirits that live in the world beyond and so vehemently has it remained in going after them that if it has not been able to lay hands on the truth in this matter, it has even adopted the most erroneous and flawed notions about it. The soothsayers and magicians of Arabia regarded the jinn, devils and voices from the beyond to be a means to communicate with the world beyond; the astrologers of India would try to unravel the secrets of the unknown world through the paths followed by heavenly bodies. The worshippers of Chinese temples would try to contact the unknown world by means of the spirits of their forefathers. The Qur’ān negated all these unfounded means of communication with the unknown world and regarded knowledge gained through these means to be an amalgam of truth, and untruth and at the same time explained that the only reliable means of communicating with God is the angels who come to His messengers and whatever God asks them to deliver these messengers, they do so in its original form.³⁹

3. Belief in the Prophets

إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّنَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ
وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطَ وَعِيسَى وَأَيُّوبَ وَبُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَاتَّبَعْنَا دَاؤُودَ زَبُورًا وَرَسُلًا قَدْ
قَصَصْنَا هُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلٍ وَرَسُلًا لَمْ نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ وَكَلَمُ اللَّهِ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا رُسُلًا مُبَشِّرِينَ

39. Ibid., vol. 1, 424.

وَمُنْذِرِينَ لَهَا يَكُونُ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا (٤: ١٦٣ - ١٦٥)

[O Prophet!] We sent our revelations to you the way We sent [them] to Noah and to the prophets who came after him; And We revealed [them] to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the progeny of Jacob, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, Solomon and We gave the Psalms to David. We have sent revelations to messengers whom we have mentioned to you earlier and to some messengers whom We have not mentioned to you and with Moses God had spoken, the way one speaks: these messengers who were sent as bearers of glad tidings and of admonishment so that after them people are left with no excuse which they can present before God, and God is Mighty and Wise. (4:163-165)

People through whom the Almighty completed providing His guidance to mankind are called prophets. They were, in fact, human beings; however, the Almighty selected them for this purpose on the basis of His all embracing knowledge and wisdom. As such, prophethood is God-given and cannot be acquired through self-effort or training.⁴⁰ The Qur’ān has narrated the incident in which Moses (sws) was given prophethood. When he reached the valley of Sinai with his family on his way back from Midian, it was night-time. It was difficult to find one’s way in the dark and it appears that it was quite chilly too. Meanwhile, a darting flame was seen at a distance and perhaps no one except Moses (sws) observed it. He bade his family to stay where they were and himself expressed his desire to find out more about what he had seen and possibly bring back some fire to warm themselves or that if there were people there he would inquire from them the way to the fire. When he came near the place he had sighted the flame, he heard a voice say: “Moses! I am Your Lord, so take off your shoes; you are in the sacred valley of Tuwā; I have selected you for the responsibility of prophethood and messengerhood; so listen carefully to whatever is being revealed to you.” The Qur’ān has told us that after this he was given the same message as was given to other prophets:

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَقِيمُ الصَّلَاةِ لِذِكْرِي إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ عَاتِيَةٌ أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا لِتُجْزَى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَى فَلَا يَصُدُّنَّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَأَتَيْعَ هَوَاهُ فَتَرْدَى (٢٠: ١٤ - ١٦)

I am God. Indeed, there is no god but Me. So serve Me, and for My remembrance, pray with vigilance. The Hour is sure to come – but I will keep it hidden – [it shall come] so that every soul is rewarded for its labours. Thus any person who does not believe in it and yields to his desires should not turn you away from the prayer, lest you perish. (20:14-16)

It is Moses’ (sws) distinction that God spoke to him. The incident of the first revelation to Muḥammad (sws) has been mentioned in the Qur’ān in Sūrah Najm.

40. The Qur’ān, 6:125.

It is evident from it that the position of prophethood was conferred on him through Gabriel, the exalted angel of God. The Qur'ān says that on this occasion he appeared in his actual form on the higher horizon and the Prophet (sws) saw him with his naked eyes. He then came near him to instruct him and just as an affectionate teacher bends over his dearly loved student, he bent over him with great love and affection and came so close to him that he was within two bows' length or even closer. Then he revealed to the Prophet (sws) whatever he had been directed to reveal:

عَلَمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَىٰ ذُو مَرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَىٰ وَهُوَ بِالْأَفْقِ الْأَعْلَىٰ ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّىٰ فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ
فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَى عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ (٥٣:٥٠ - ٥١)

He was taught by an Angel, mighty in power, towering in character, endued with wisdom – while he stood poised, being on the higher horizon. Then he drew near and came down within two bows' length or even closer. The Almighty then revealed to His servant that which He revealed. (53:5-10)

These prophets were sent to every community. God had promised Adam (sws) that He would guide his progeny through guidance revealed by Him. This guidance was given to mankind through these very prophets. After receiving revelations from God, they tell what is the truth to people, give glad tidings to those who believe in Him and warn those who do not believe in Him of a dreadful fate. Consequently, at one place, while addressing the Prophet (sws), the Qur'ān says:

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَإِنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا حَلَّ فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ (٣٥:٢٤)

We have sent you with the truth as a bearer of glad tidings and warnings and there is no community in which a warner never came. (35:24)

The details regarding these prophets which have been mentioned in the Qur'ān and which should be kept in consideration by everyone for professing faith in them are discussed in the following paragraphs.

i. The Essence of Prophethood

Prophethood is the selection of an individual for the purpose of communication with the Almighty. The Qur'ān has informed man that he has been blessed with this honour in two ways:

Firstly, communication from behind a veil. In this case, a person hears a voice but does not see who is conversing with him. God spoke to Moses (sws) in this way. He started to hear a voice from a tree in the valley of the mount Sinai but there was no one he could see.⁴¹

Secondly, through *wahī*. This word is used for revealing something in the heart of someone. This again has two forms: firstly, God directly reveals His message to the

41. The Qur'ān, 28:29-30.

heart of a prophet; secondly, He sends an angel and this angel reveals something to the heart of a prophet on behalf of the Almighty. This phenomenon can occur both when a prophet is awake and in a vision while he is asleep. In case of a vision, whatever is communicated is at times in symbolic form. The way revelations would come to Muhammad (sws) is described in various Ḥadīth narratives. It is evident from them that in its most intense form, the sound of a ringing bell would precede the process of revelation. Such was the intensity of the whole process that he would be drenched with sweat even in the coldest of weather.⁴² The Qur’ān has specified that apart from this observation the nature of *wahī* is beyond the comprehension of man:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّيِّ وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنِ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا (٨٥:١٧)

And they ask you about *al-rūḥ* [– ie. the *wahī* –]. Tell them: “This *al-rūḥ* is from among my Lord’s command. Little indeed is the knowledge given to you.” (17:85)

Since revelations come to the prophets without any desire of their own and from the divine part of their soul, they are absolutely sure about their authenticity. However, at various occasions, for their own satisfaction the Almighty shows them extra-ordinary sights and experiences. An example of this is the Prophet’s journey from the Baytullāh to the Aqṣā mosque that occurred in a vision shown to him.⁴³ Such experiences also occur in real life. Following is an example of such an experience:

وَلَقَدْ رَأَهُ نَزَلَةً أُخْرَى عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَى عِنْدَهَا حَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَى إِذْ يَعْشَى السِّدْرَةُ مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ
وَمَا طَغَى لَقَدْ رَأَى مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكَبِيرِ (١٨-١٣:٥٣)

And he beheld him once again at the *sidrah* tree, beyond which no one can pass near which is the Garden of Repose. At that time, the *sidrah* tree was covered with that which covered it. [His] sight did not wander, nor did it exceed the limit. [In such a manner], he saw some of his Lord’s greatest signs. (53:13-18)

At one place in the Qur’ān, all these ways of communicating with God are mentioned together:

وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُكَلِّمَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فِيُوحِيَ بِإِذْنِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ
إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ حَكِيمٌ (٤٢:٥١)

And it is not the status of any mortal that God should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a veil or He sends a messenger and through His

42. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1, (no. 2); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1028, (no. 6059).

43. The Qur’ān, 17:1.

permission, he sends revelation to him of what He wills. Exalted is He, and Wise. (42:51)

It is evident from the words of the above verse that divine revelation is not sent to a prophet in the form of an idea or a thought; it is in the form of words which he hears, understands and preserves. These words and their style are however something which a prophet is already familiar with so that they are not incomprehensible and alien to him. It is for this very reason that both the words and meanings of a revelation are specific to a prophet depending upon his circumstances and abilities.

ii. Need for a Prophet

Just as a person has been given the ability to infer through parables and induction, to make a whole through components and then explain the components through the whole, to assimilate ideologies through what is obvious and to draw analogies from what can be felt through the senses for what cannot be felt, he has also been given the ability to distinguish between good and evil and to make a distinction between what is right and what is wrong and in fact he even has a comprehension of his Lord and His justice. We have already alluded to these abilities of man earlier. Thus a prophet is not needed to inform people of these things. All these are ingrained in his nature and innately found in him. The Qur'ānic verse (4:163-165) which has been earlier referred to at the beginning of this section "Belief in the Prophets" shows that the need for a prophet did not arise to inform man of these things; it arose because of two other reasons:

Firstly, for completion of guidance. This means that man be reminded of whatever is ingrained in his nature in concise form and of whatever he has known eternally and all its details be specified for him. In certain verses, the Qur'ān has regarded this to be a completion of divine favour:

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدِيُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِيْعَلُ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ (٢١:٧٣)

And We made these [prophets] leaders to give guidance at Our behest, and revealed to them to do pious deeds, show diligence in the prayer and give *zakāh*. And they worshipped none but Ourselves. (21:73)

Secondly, for *itmām al-hujjah*. This means to awaken man from his slumber of unawareness and after providing the testimony of his intellect and knowledge provide another testimony through these prophets to such an extent that no one is left with any excuse to deny the truth:

يَا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِلَيْسِ أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتٍ وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا قَالُوا شَهِدْنَا عَلَى أَنفُسِنَا وَغَرَبُهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَشَهِدُوا عَلَى أَنفُسِهِمْ أَتَهُمْ كَانُوا كَافِرِينَ

ذَلِكَ أَن لَمْ يَكُنْ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقَرَى بِطُلْمٍ وَأَهْلُهَا غَافِلُونَ (٦ : ١٣٠ - ١٣١)

“O Jinn and men! Did there not come to you prophets from among you who proclaimed to you My revelations and warned you of [your] meeting with this day?” They will reply: “We bear witness against our own selves” – And indeed, the life of this world deceived them and they testified against themselves that they were disbelievers – this was because your Lord does not destroy cities because of their oppression if their inhabitants are not aware of the truth. (6:130-131)

iii. Identifying a Prophet (sws)

The highest of human traits are personified in a prophet and his message is based on what is known and familiar to human nature. The fountainhead of all virtues is two things: remembering the Almighty and showing sympathy to the poor. A prophet is an embodiment of these virtues and urges others as well to adopt them. Whatever he says to people, conforms to the highest intellectual standard and what he says relates only to those things about which man can become indifferent or forgetful. Moreover, his prophethood is not something which can be acquired through self-effort. Hence, every right-minded person has no difficulty in recognizing him. If a person has a discerning mind and a vibrant heart, then the very person of a prophet is a miracle:

قُلْ لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا تَلَوَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَدْرَاكُمْ بِهِ فَقَدْ لَيْسَتُ فِيْكُمْ عُمَراً مِّنْ قَبْلِهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (١٠ : ١٦)

Tell them: “Had God pleased, I would never have recited this Qur’ān to you, nor would He have made you aware of it. [It is His decision] because I have spent a life-time among you. Do you not use your senses?” (10:16)

However, besides this, the Almighty blesses a prophet with potent signs which though may not induce his adversaries to openly acknowledge him but are enough to leave them with no excuse to deny his veracity. For this very reason, at one place, the Qur’ān (4:159) has declared that every one from among the People of the Book of the times of Muhammad (sws) before his own death would profess faith in him. It is evident from the Qur’ān that these signs are given to every prophet and their nature depends upon his times and circumstances. We shall mention a few of these in the following paragraphs.

1. A prophet generally comes in accordance with the prediction of the prophet who precedes him and comes as fulfilment of this prediction. Viewed thus, he is not an un-introduced personality. People are familiar with him and also await him. It is known from the Qur’ān (3:39) that the Prophet John (sws) foretold the coming of Jesus (sws) all over Jerusalem. It is evident from the Qur’ān (7:157) that the predictions of the advent of Muhammad (sws) are mentioned both in the Old and the New Testaments. One of the primary objectives of the advent of Jesus (sws), according to the Qur’ān (61:6), was to prophesy about the coming of an unlettered Prophet in Arabia. The Qur’ān (6:20) has presented the fact that the scholars of the Israelites recognize it the way an estranged father recognizes his

son as a conclusive proof of its own authenticity. This means that they also fully recognized Muḥammad (sws):

وَإِنَّهُ لَتَقْرِيلُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيًّا مُّبِينٌ
وَإِنَّهُ لِغَيْرِ الْأَوَّلِينَ أَوَّلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ آيَةً أَنْ يَعْلَمُهُ عُلَمَاءُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (٢٦: ١٩٢-١٩٧)

And this has been revealed by the Lord of the Universe with great care and attention. The faithful Spirit has brought it down into your heart so that you may become a warner to people in eloquent Arabic speech. It is also mentioned in the early scriptures. Is not this a sufficient proof for them that the scholars of the Israelites know him? (26:192-197)

2. Whatever a prophet presents as the word and message of God is without any contradiction and inconsistency. Even the most ultimate of geniuses of this world like Socrates and Aristotle, Kant and Einstein, Ghālib and Iqbāl, al-Rāzī and al-Zamakhsharī cannot make such a claim about the works they have produced. However, the Qur’ān has vehemently asserted about itself that there is not a semblance of contradiction in the philosophy and ideology it presents. Is it possible that for years a person should give speeches on a variety of topics in different situations and circumstances and when these speeches are compiled from the beginning to the end they form such a harmonious and congruous discourse that it has no contradiction of views and does not reflect any effects of mood change of the speaker and also does not depict any revision or change of views? Only the Qur’ān has this characteristic:

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا (٤: ٨٢)

Do they not ponder on the Qur’ān? Had it come from someone other than God, they would have found many contradictions in it. (4:82)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

... so sound and well-knitted is every idea of the Qur’ān, both in its principle and in the corollaries of these principles that even the formulae of Arithmetic and Geometry are not as sound and well-knitted. So connected and linked are the beliefs it teaches that if any one of these beliefs is removed, the whole chain and sequence falls apart. The rituals of worship and other directives it gives spring from beliefs just as branches spring from a stem. The deeds and morals it instructs its followers to obey emanate from their principles in a manner natural and obvious consequences emanate from something. The system of life which comes into existence as a result of its overall teaching is like that of a lead-cemented wall in which each and every brick is attached to the other in a manner that it cannot be separated from the other except if a gap is created in the whole structure.⁴⁴

44. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 2, 347.

3. A prophet is blessed with miracles from God. The Qur'ān has specified that one of the reasons for which extra-ordinary miracles were given to Jesus (sws) and Moses (sws) was to authenticate them as Messengers of God. Consequently, after mentioning the staff of Moses (sws) and his white hand, the Qur'ān says:

فَذَانَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلِئَةِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ (٣٢:٢٨)

So, these are two clear signs from your Lord for the Pharaoh and his leaders. Surely, they are disobedient people. (28:32)

No one can reject these miracles by pronouncing them as magic or trickery. The reason for this is that the reality behind such things is very much known to those adept in such disciplines and they too are compelled to acknowledge such miracles. In order to eliminate the influence of the miracles of Moses (sws) referred to above, the Pharaoh had adopted this very test. The Qur'ān says that he sent for all the top-notch magicians of his country and presented them before people at a festival. He made this arrangement anticipating victory but when these magicians saw the staff of Moses (sws) consuming their spells they prostrated before him at once and declared their faith in the Lord of Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws). Since such faith is only produced when someone witnesses a reality through his very eyes, hence such was its strength that when the Pharaoh threatened to haphazardly cut their hands and feet and to crucify them on the trunks of palm-trees, these magicians, who a very short while ago were imploring for reward (the Qur'ān, 7:113) from him, declared vehemently that after witnessing such a phenomenon they did not even care for their lives:

فَأَلْوَاهُنَّ لَنْ تُؤْثِرُوكُمْ عَلَى مَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالَّذِي فَطَرْنَا فَاقْضِيْ مَا أَنْتَ قَاضٍ إِنَّمَا تَنْهِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةَ
الَّذِي أَنَّا آمَنَّا بِرِبِّنَا لِيَعْفُرَ لَنَا حَطَّا يَانَا وَمَا أَكْرَهْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السُّخْرِ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ وَأَنْتَ (٧٣-٧٢ : ٢٠)

They replied: "We shall never give preference to you over the clear signs which have come to us and over the being Who created us. So do what you want. At best, you can only decide the fate of this life. We have professed faith in our Lord so that He forgives our sins and forgoes this sorcery you have forced us to adopt. God only is good and He only will remain forever." (20:72-73)

The miracle given to Prophet Muhammad (sws) to validate his prophethood is the Qur'ān. When those who are aware of the stylistic features of Arabic language and of its literary tradition and also have a literary appreciation of the language read the Qur'ān, they clearly feel that this could not have been produced by human beings. Thus, at more than one instance, it has challenged its addressees who do not regard it to be of divine origin and regard it to be a fabrication of Muhammad (sws) to produce just a single *sūrah* that can match the majestic style of the Qur'ān. If, as they say, a person from their people can do

such a thing without any literary background, then they too should have no problem in doing this.

This is a very amazing challenge thrown by the Qur'ān. It meant that it is not possible for a human mind to produce anything similar to the Qur'ān. This challenge related to the extraordinary uniqueness of the Qur'ān with regard to its sublime style and eloquence. It required that they present a discourse in which, like the Qur'ān, one could see God speaking in it; it should be a discourse that explains everything that is necessary for mankind and which was never explained by any human being; it should guide them in affairs in which there is no other means of guidance; a discourse on which our intuition bears witness, which is corroborated by established facts derived from knowledge and reason, which enlivens dead hearts the way rain enlivens desolate terrains, which has the same majesty and grandeur felt in each and every word by every person who knows the language of the Qur'ān.

History tells us that no one from among its addressees dared to face this challenge. The Qur'ān says:

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأَثْوَرُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّنْ مُّثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعُلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعُلُوا فَاقْتُلُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِ يَنْ (٢٤-٢٣ : ٢)

And if you are in doubt about what We have revealed to Our servant, then [go and] produce a single *sūrah* like it. And [for this purpose] also call your leaders besides Allah, if you are truthful [in your claim]. But if you cannot – and of a surety you cannot – then fear the Fire whose fuel is these men [who do not believe] and these stones also [whom they worship]. It has been prepared for these rejecters. (2:23-24)

This Book of God is still with us. Fourteen centuries have passed ever since it was revealed. During this period, our world has undergone tremendous changes. Many ideologies and thoughts were presented by man only to be rejected by him later. Theories regarding man's being and those regarding the universe around him were put forth every now and then. Each underwent a process of acceptance or rejection in various periods of time. His intellectual journey took him through various paths and destinations; however, this Book of God is the only book which is as unassailable and sound today as it was fourteen centuries ago regarding the various facts it presents and which have remained under academic discussion in the past two centuries. Knowledge and intellect helplessly acknowledged its superiority at that time the way they do today. Every statement it has given has stood the test of time. The world, in spite of its astounding scientific and academic discoveries, has failed to present a better alternative to the views it presents:

وَبِالْحَقِّ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ وَبِالْحَقِّ نَزَّلَ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا (١٧: ١٥٠)

And We have revealed it with the truth, and with the truth it has come down and O Prophet! We have sent you forth only to proclaim good news [for those who believe] and to give warning [to those who deny]. (17:105)

4. The Almighty informs a prophet of certain unknown things which are impossible to come into the knowledge of any other human being. One example of this is the predictions made by divine revelations which were fulfilled to the utmost. Some of these predictions are mentioned in the Qur'ān and some in the Ḥadīth narratives. Every student of the Qur'ān is aware of the predictions regarding the supremacy of the Prophet Muhammad (sws) in Arabia, the conquest of Makkah and the people entering the folds of Islam in multitudes. Another great prediction made by the Qur'ān was the victory of the Romans after being defeated by the Iranians. The Qur'ān says:

عَلِّيَتِ الرُّومُ فِي أَدْنَى الْأَرْضِ وَهُم مِّنْ بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَعْلَمُونَ فِي بِصْعِ سِينِ لَهُ الْأَمْرُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ
بَعْدٍ وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ بِنَصْرِ اللَّهِ يَنْصُرُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ
وَعْدَهُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٠: ٦-٢)

The Romans have been defeated in a nearby land. But in a few years after this defeat, they shall become victorious. Whatever happened earlier, happened because of God's directive and what happens later will happen because of His directive. And on that day, the believers will rejoice because of God's help. He helps whomsoever He wants to and He is the Mighty and Ever-Merciful. This is God's promise and God never goes back on His promise, yet most men do not know it. (30:2-6)

When this prediction was made, then in the words of Edward Gibbon: "No prophecy could be more distant from its accomplishment, since the first twelve years of Heraclius announced the approaching dissolution of the empire."⁴⁵ However, it was fulfilled at the very time it was meant to and in March 628 AD the Roman emperor returned to Constantinople with such splendour that four elephants were pulling his chariot and numerous people stood outside the city with lanterns and branches of olive to welcome back their hero.

5. Prophets who are also designated as messengers (*rusul*) are a symbol of divine justice in this world and decide the fate of their people in this very world. The details of this premise are that if these messengers abide by their covenant with God, they are rewarded in this world and if they deviate from it, they are punished in this world. The result is that the very existence of these messengers becomes a sign of God and it is as if they witness God walking with these messengers on earth and administering justice. It is this situation which becomes the basis of passing judgement by the Almighty both in this world and in that to

45. Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 2 (New York: The Modern Library, n.d.), 788.

come. Consequently, the Almighty grants supremacy to these messengers and punishes those who reject their message:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٤٧:١٠)

And for each community, there is a messenger. Then when their messenger comes, their fate it decided with justice and they are not wronged. (10:47)

iv. Prophets are Human Beings

Prophets are human beings. Thus they come in this world, eat, drink, sleep, walk about, marry and die just as all human beings do. None of them was God, His incarnation, a deity or an angel. The Qur'ān has clarified at a number of places that there is no difference between them and other human beings as far as their genre is concerned. The Qur'ān has cited the demand of the addressees of Muḥammad (sws) that if he is a Prophet of God, he should make for them houses of gold, generate for them canals and rivers, make the season of spring descend in their deserts, plant for them orchards of grapes and dates, release on them pieces of the heavens, bring God and the angels face to face with them, go to the heavens and bring back a written document for them. Though none of these demands was impossible for God to fulfil but He directed Muḥammad (sws) to clearly tell his addressees that he was a human being and not a super human that such demands be made from him:

قُلْ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيْ هَلْ كُنْتُ إِلَّا بَشَرًا رَسُولاً وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءُهُمُ الْهُدَى إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ بَشَرًا رَسُولاً قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَلَائِكَةٌ يَمْسُوْنَ مُطْمَئِنِينَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَلَكًا رَسُولاً (٩٥-٩٣ : ١٧)

Say: "Glory be to my Lord! Am I not but a Messenger who is a human being?" And nothing prevents men from professing faith when guidance is revealed to them but the excuse: "Can it be that God has sent a human being as a messenger?" Tell [them]: "Had the angels been walking about comfortably in the earth, We would have sent down to them an angel from heavens as a messenger." (17:93-95)

However, this does not mean that as far as their knowledge and personality, character and spirituality and qualities of head and heart are concerned, they are similar to common people. Certainly not! A study of their life and times shows that they are the cream of their nation, have exemplary qualities and epitomize human attributes. The Qur'ān has told us that if their Lord pleases, He blesses them with special knowledge and power of judgement for this purpose:

About John (sws), the Qur'ān has said:

يَا يَحْيَىْ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا وَحَتَّا مِنْ لَدُنَّا وَزَكَّاهُ وَكَانَ تَقِيًّا وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدِيهِ

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ جَبَارًا عَصِيًّا (١٤-١٢ : ١٩)

“O John! Hold steadfast to the Book of God.” And in His childhood We granted him the ability to make judgements and bestowed on him kindness and purity, and he was a pious person and one who honoured the rights of his parents; he was neither arrogant nor rebellious. (19:12-14)

About Moses (sws), the Qur’ān has said:

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَاسْتَوَى آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٢٨: ٢٨)

And when he had reached maturity and grown to manhood, We bestowed on him knowledge and the ability to make judgements. [This was a reward of his qualities]; thus do We reward the righteous. (28:14)

Not only this, the prophets of God are also blessed with the light of innate guidance – the light which every person has been blessed with – in its most ultimate form. They always keep its flame fully alight and shield it from the storms that arise within man’s inner-self. Thus before they are blessed with divine revelation from God, their heart and mind are very pure and the truth is already evident to them to a great extent. The Qur’ān calls this state of their inner enlightenment as بَيِّنَةٌ (bayyinah). It is evident from various incidents from the lives of the prophets that they present divine revelation as an evidence for this inner enlightenment and the vision they possess:

About Noah (sws), the Qur’ān has said

قَالَ يَا قَوْمَ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّي وَآتَانِي رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِهِ فَعُمِّيَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْلَهِ مُكَمُّوْهَا وَأَنْتُمْ لَهَا كَارِهُونَ (٢٨: ١١)

He said: “O my people! [tell me] if I am on a clear evidence from my Lord and He has bestowed upon me a blessing of His own and you have not been able to see it, can we forcibly stick it on you while you are fed-up with it? (11:28)

About Shāliḥ (sws), the Qur’ān has said:

قَالَ يَا قَوْمَ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّي وَآتَانِي مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً فَمَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ عَصَيْتُهُ (٦٣: ١١)

He said: “O my people! Have you ever thought that if I am on a clear evidence from my Lord and then He has also bestowed on me His grace, then who would protect me from God if I disobeyed Him?” (11:63)

About Shu‘ayb (sws), the Qur’ān has said:

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَبِّيْ وَرَزَقَنِيْ مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُخَالِفَكُمْ إِلَيْ مَا أَنْهَا كُمْ عَنْهُ (٨٨:١١)

He said: “O my people! [Tell me] if am on a clear evidence from my Lord and then He has also bestowed on me the gracious gift of *wahī*, [then what should I call you to except this?] and I do not wish to oppose you [and thus] do what I forbid you.” (11:88)

v. A Prophet’s Nature

A prophet stands at the zenith of human nature. It is evident from what is mentioned about their lives in divine scriptures that both anger and mercy are found in them. Anxiety and apprehension, grief and distress also touch them and they also experience longing and sorrow. They feel sad too and if they commit some mistake they also feel remorse. Like humble servants of God they too express repentance before Him and at times engage in emphatic debate and discussion with Him. They are equipped with such emotions in order to create harmony between them and their addressees before whom they proclaim the truth to the extent that they are left with no excuse to deny it and in order that these addressees are influenced by them. If, like the angels, they were devoid of such emotions, their message would not have influenced anyone.

Not only this, besides being exemplary human beings, they are the most perfect individuals among their people. A study of their lives reveals that each prophet is the most outstanding person of his nation, a guardian of its cultural traditions and an embodiment of all its virtues.

No doubt, he is devoid of all the vices of his nation; however, as far as its traits and characteristics are concerned, he is such a complete embodiment of them that both he and his people are like mirrors for each other: they can see themselves in each other. For this very reason, the Qur’ān has said that if the Almighty had made the angels as prophets and messengers, He would have them human beings because without this there would have been no effective channel and means of communication between prophets and their people:

وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ مَلَكًا لَجَعَلْنَاهُ رَجُلًا وَلَبَسْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَا يَلْبِسُونَ (٩:٦)

And if We had made a prophet an angel, We would have given him the semblance of a human and in this manner would have put them in doubt in which they now are in. (6:9)

However, the matter of prophets – who only come to deliver the truth to the degree that no one among their people would be left with an excuse to deny it – is different to some extent. One example of this is John (sws) and Jesus (sws). By nature, they seemed more akin to angels; thus little did their people benefit from them.

vi. Innocence of Prophets

Only those people are chosen as prophets who are able to shield themselves from

the lures of their inner-self as well as those of Satan, guard themselves against sin and are the righteous and pious among their people. In Sūrah An‘ām, after enumerating many prophets, it is said (٨٦ : ٦) (all of them were كُلُّ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (all of them were among the righteous, (6:86)). At another place, the words are:

وَإِذْكُرْ عِبَادَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولَئِي الْأَيْدِيِّينَ وَالْأَصْصَارِ إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُمْ بِخَالِصَةِ ذَكْرِيِّ
الدَّارِ وَإِنَّهُمْ عِنْدَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنَ الْأَخْيَارِ وَإِذْكُرْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ وَكُلُّ مِنَ الْأَخْيَارِ
(٣٨-٤٥)

And remember Our servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: men of might and vision. We chose them for a special mission – reminding [people] about the Hereafter – and with Us they are counted among the best and the most righteous of men. And also remember Ishmael, Elisha, and Dhū al-Kifl. [We chose all of them] and all of these were the best of men. (38:45-48)

As a reward for exercising care and showing piety, the Almighty also protects them. It is clearly evident from what ensued between the Prophet Joseph (sws) and the royal lady of Egypt that even before being designated as a prophet if a situation arises in which it becomes difficult for him to shield himself, the Almighty does so with His special *burhān* (sign). This *burhān* is the divine spark which is found in every human being. However, according to a divine law, in people who duly honour it and accept its guidance in the vicissitudes of life, it becomes stronger and brighter and in all delicate circumstances glitters and sparkles even more to light up the darkness that might come before the eyes. The result is that they are able to persevere on what is right:

وَلَقَدْ هَمَتْ يَهُ وَهُمْ بِهَا لَوْلَا أَنْ رَأَى بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ كَذَلِكَ لِتَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوءَ وَالْفَحْشَاءَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ
عِبَادِنَا الْمُحْلَصِينَ (١٢: ٤١)

And that woman had advanced to him and Joseph too would have advanced to her, had he not seen a sign from his Lord. Thus did We do in order to keep away evil and wantonness from him. Indeed, he was from among Our chosen servants. (12:24)

The blemish of Adam (sws) mentioned in the Qur’ān should not become a source of misunderstanding for any one. No doubt, the Qur’ān has used the word ‘isyān (disobedience) for it; however, the Almighty has clarified in the Qur’ān itself that the reason for this blemish was forgetfulness. It is apparent from this that the act of disobedience did not result because he had not succumbed to base desires nor did he do it wilfully. It is evident from the Qur’ān that when Satan swore many times before him and assured him that he was his well-wisher and made him believe that he would become eternal by eating the fruit of the very tree that has been forbidden to him, he was enticed by Satan’s lures and being overcome with emotions ended up disobeying his Lord. However, he never

insisted on his lapse and became very ashamed and repented before God Who graciously forgave him and blessed him with prophethood:

وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَا إِلَى آدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَرْمًا وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةَ اسْجُدُوا لِلآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَيْهِ إِنَّمَا يَا آدَمُ إِنَّهَا عَدُوُّ لَكَ وَلَزُوْجُكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكُمَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْفَعُنِي إِنْ لَكَ أَلَا تَجْوِعَ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرِي وَأَنْكَ لَا تَظْمَأِ فِيهَا وَلَا تَصْحَى فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ هَلْ أَدْلُكَ عَلَى شَجَرَةِ الْحُلْدِ وَمُلْكُ لَا يَبْلِي فَأَكَلَ مِنْهَا فَبَدَأْتُ لَهُمَا سُوَّا ثُمَّا وَطَفَقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَعَصَى آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَى ثُمَّ احْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ فِتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدَى (٢٠: ١١٥-١٢٢)

And before this, We bound Adam in a directive but he forgot, and We found him lacking in determination. And remember when We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves before Adam." They all prostrated themselves except Satan, who refused. At this, We said to Adam: "He is an enemy to you and to your wife. Let him not turn you both out of Paradise and you end up deprived. Here you shall neither be afflicted with hunger nor remain naked; neither shall thirst bother you nor the scorching heat." But Satan enticed him saying: "Adam, shall I not lead you to the tree of immortality and an imperishable kingdom?" At last, both of them ate of its fruit so that their private parts became evident to them and they began to cover themselves with the leaves of the garden [in which they lived]. Thus did Adam disobey his Lord and strayed from the right path. Then his Lord chose him, accepted his repentance and blessed him with guidance. (20:115-122)

No different was the case of Moses (sws). He never killed anyone deliberately. It was a mere co-incidence that he, while helping an oppressed person, had to encounter the arrogant Coptic oppressor in a brawl. Moses (sws) punched him. Unfortunately, the strike was enough to kill him:

وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِينَةَ عَلَى حِينِ غَفَلَةٍ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَلَانِ هَذَا مِنْ شَيْئِهِ وَهَذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَاسْتَعْنَاهُ الَّذِي مِنْ شَيْئِهِ عَلَى الَّذِي مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَوَكَزَهُ مُوسَى فَقَضَى عَلَيْهِ قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ عَدُوُّ مُضِلٌّ مُبِينٌ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي فَعَفَرَ لَهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ (٢٨: ١٥-١٦)

And [one day] he entered the city at a time when none of its people noticed him and found two men engaged in a fight; one of them was from his own people and the other belonged to his enemies. Then the person who belonged to his people asked for Moses' help against his enemy. So Moses struck him with his fist and killed him. [Seeing this,] Moses said: "This is the work of Satan; he is indeed an open enemy who leads [people] astray." [Then] Moses prayed: "Lord! I have wronged my soul; forgive me." Consequently, the Almighty forgave him. Indeed, He is the Most Forgiving, the Ever Merciful.

(28:15-16)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

... neither did Moses (sws) intend to kill the Coptic nor did he imagine that such a situation would arise. When, absolutely inadvertently, this situation arose, he immediately felt guilt on his folly and repented before his Lord expressing the fact that he had wronged his soul and that he be forgiven for this. Since this folly was an inadvertent act and he immediately sought repentance after it, the Almighty forgave him and he was divinely communicated this forgiveness also. God is Forgiving and Merciful.⁴⁶

These incidents in the lives of Adam (sws) and Moses (sws) took place before they were called to prophethood. According to the Qur'ān, once they are given this position, prophets constantly remain under the protection and supervision of the angels. The Almighty deputes guardians over them from all sides. Every single thing that emanates from them is under scrutiny, and God keeps track whether they have accurately delivered His messages in their original form. After such an arrangement, obviously the smallest of blemishes on their part stands safeguarded:

إِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضَى مِنْ رَسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا لِيَعْلَمَ أَنْ قَدْ أَنْبَلُوا رِسَالَاتِ
رِبِّهِمْ وَأَحْاطَ بِمَا لَدُنْهُمْ وَأَحْصَى كُلُّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا (٧٢: ٢٨-٢٧)

As for those whom He chooses as His Prophets [they can say nothing of their own] because He guards them from behind and from the front that He may know if they have delivered the messages of their Lord; and He surrounds whatever is around them and keeps count of all their things. (72:27-28)

vii. A Prophet's Diligence in Worship

Keeping in view the obligation of prophets, at times they are required to be more extensive in their worship. The purpose of this is to provide them with peace of mind and by means of dedicated devotion to God, bless them with purity of emotions and intellect and perseverance on what they believe and what they do. About Moses (sws), the Qur'ān (7:142-145) says that when it was decided that he be given the tablets of the Torah, then, prior to this, in order to train and instruct him to bear this heavy burden he was made to station himself in seclusion at the mount of Sinai for forty days. John (sws) and Jesus (sws) to the extent of monasticism took to intense devotion to God and did not even marry because they wanted to spend every moment of their lives in the effort to communicate the truth to their people whose fate was being decided to the extent that they were left with no excuse to deny it. For this very reason, prophet Muḥammad (sws) would sit in *i'tikāf* every year and keep fasts from time to time. When he was directed to

46. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 5, 663.

embark upon openly warning his people, besides the five obligatory prayers, another prayer was made obligatory on him. The time of *tahajjud* was fixed for this prayer and he was asked to read the Qur'ān in this prayer for less than half the night or a little more. In Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, this directive is stated in the words (٧٩ : ١٧) (and at night time, pray the *tahajjud*; this is a further [obligation] on you, (17:79)). Similarly, in Sūrah Muzzammil, it is stated:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُرْمَلُ قُمْ اللَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا نَصْفَهُ أَوْ اثْقَصْهُ مِنْهُ قَلِيلًا أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَأَلْ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي
عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا إِنْ تَأْشِعَ اللَّيْلَ هِيَ أَشَدُ وَطَنًا وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلًا إِنْ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبِحًا طَوِيلًا وَإِذْ كُرْ اسْمَ
رَبِّكَ وَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبَتِّلًا (٨١ : ٧٣)

O you enfolded in your shawl! Stand [in prayer] by night, but not all night. Half the night, or even less or a little more and [in this prayer of yours] recite the Qur'ān in a slow measured tone. Because soon We shall lay on you the burden of a heavy word [the burden of open warning]. Verily, this rising by night is very suitable for the mind's peace and the heart's resolve and for the speech's correctness. Because during the daytime you will be hard-pressed with [this task; so pray at this time] and remember the name of your Lord and [in this loneliness of the night] devote yourself entirely to Him. (73:1-8)

viii. Superiority of Prophets

Prophets hold a general degree of superiority over all human beings. Consequently, the Qur'ān, at one place, after mentioning some prophets has said: (٦ : ٨٦) (وَكُلًا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ). However, at another place, the Qur'ān has clarified that these prophets amongst themselves – specially, the messengers (*rusul*) among them also hold relative superiority over one another in some aspect:

تُلَكُ الرُّسُلُ فَصَّلَنَا بِعَصْبُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ مِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَلَمَ اللَّهُ وَرَفَعَ بَعْصُهُمْ دَرَجَاتٍ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ
مَرِيمَ الْبَيْتَنَاتِ وَآيَدَنَا بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ (٢ : ٢٥٣)

Among these messengers We have exalted some above others such that to some God spoke directly, others He raised to a lofty status [in some other capacity] and [at the end] gave Jesus, son of Mary, manifest signs and helped him through the Holy Spirit. (2:253)

It is evident from this that God conversed with Moses (sws). In this particular aspect, he was superior to other prophets. Jesus (sws) was given manifest signs and was helped through the Holy Spirit and in this aspect was superior to others. In a similar manner, other prophets were blessed with some aspects of relative superiority. About himself, Muḥammad (sws) is reported to have said:

فُضِّلْتُ عَلَى الْأَنْبِيَاءِ بِسِتٌّ أُغْطِيَتُ جَوَامِعَ الْكَلِمِ وَتُصْرِتُ بِالرُّغْبِ وَاحْلَتُ لِي الْعَنَائِمُ وَجَعَلْتُ

لِي الْأَرْضُ طَهُورًا وَمَسْجِدًا وَأَرْسَلْتُ إِلَى الْخَلْقِ كَافَةً وَخُتِّمَ بِي النَّبِيُّونَ

“I have been given superiority over other prophets in six things: (1) I have the ability to say what is comprehensive and concise; (2) I have been helped by means of striking awe [in my enemies]; (3) Spoils of war have been allowed to me; (4) The earth has been made a mosque for me and a means to obtain purity also;⁴⁷ (5) I have been sent as a prophet to all mankind; (6) The chain of prophethood has culminated on me.”⁴⁸

This then is the correct attitude in expressing superiority of the prophets. At times, the Prophet (sws) has also warned people about it. Once a Companion (rta) addressed him as: يَا خَيْرَ الْبَرِّيةِ (O the best of mankind!). At this, he replied: “Such is Abraham.”⁴⁹ Once, someone asked him: “Who is the most honourable of men?” He replied: “Joseph, the Prophet, who is son of a Prophet who is the son of another Prophet who is the son of Abraham.”⁵⁰ Once when a Muslim mentioned in his oath the superiority of Muḥammad (sws) over the rest of the world, a Jew responded: “I swear by the Being who blessed superiority to Moses over the rest of the world.” When the Muslim heard these words, he got infuriated and slapped the Jew. When the Jew complained to the Prophet (sws), the latter said: “Do not regard Moses to be inferior to me. At the Day of Judgement, when I will come out of the state of unconsciousness, he will be holding one corner of the throne. He would perhaps not be unconscious or would come to senses before me.”⁵¹

So clear is the guidance of religion on this issue; however, followers of prophets have seldom adhered to it; in fact, they adopted an entirely wrong attitude in place of it because of which biases and prejudices estranged them from one another. So much so, severe animosity developed between them which resulted in clashes and conflicts.

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī writes:

... the attitude adopted by the followers of their respective prophets is that whatever prophet they professed belief in they regarded him alone to possess all qualities in their ultimate form which a human being can possibly have, and accepting any degree of pre-eminence for other prophets was deemed contrary to their beliefs. As a result of this bigotry and bias, each nation of prophets became confined in its own shell and the means of benefiting from the guidance and blessings of other prophets were closed on it. If people had adopted the right attitude, then every prophet would have been their prophet

47. The implication is that in the *sharī‘ah* given to Muḥammad (sws), the prayer cannot be offered only in places of worship but anywhere on earth and if water is not available, then dry ablution is enough both in place of *wudū* and *ghusl*.

48. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 213, (no. 1167).

49. *Ibid.*, 1040-1041, (no. 6138).

50. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 559, (no. 3353); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1045, (no. 6161).

51. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 388, (no. 2412).

and every guidance would have been their guidance and they would also have benefited from the final guidance which was revealed in the form of the Qur'ān. The following verse of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl also alludes to this fact: (وَلَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَ النَّبِيِّنَ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوِدَ زُبُورًا) (٥٥:١٧) (and We also made certain prophets superior to others and to David We gave the Psalms, (17:55)).⁵²

ix. Obeying the Prophets

An obvious outcome of professing faith in a prophet is that he should be obeyed at the behest of God. The Almighty Himself has made it very clear in His Book that a prophet is not merely to be revered, he is to be obeyed also. He is not sent that people merely regard him to be a prophet and then leave him aside; he is not merely one who counsels and preaches; he is a guide who must be obeyed. The very objective of his coming is that whatever guidance he provides in all affairs of life must be followed without any hesitation. The Almighty says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ (٤:٦٤)

And whichever messenger We sent forth, was sent so that he be obeyed by God's directive. (4:64)

The reason for this is that God does not directly interact with His servants. He gives guidance through prophets and messengers. No doubt, the real objective is to obey God. However, the means through which He can be obeyed is by obeying his prophets. In verses such as (مَنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ (٤:٨٠)) (he who obeys the Messenger, in fact obeyed God, (4:80)) and others of similar meaning, the Almighty has alluded to this reality. He has also stated the ultimate limit to which a prophet needs to be obeyed: people must whole-heartedly and without any hesitation accept his decision in disputes which arise among them:

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَحَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مَّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا (٤:٦٥)

I swear by your Lord that they cannot be believers until they accept your decision in their disputes and whatever you decide they submit to without any unwillingness of their hearts. (4:65)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

... the Almighty has sworn by Himself and said that these people cannot be regarded as believers until they accept Prophet Muhammad (sws) as their arbitrator in all disputes which arise among them, and at the same time there comes a mental change in them that they accept his verdict without any hesitation whatsoever and with full willingness of the heart and without any

52. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 583.

reservation, consign themselves to him. Obeying a prophet is tantamount to obeying God; hence the obligation imposed on them is not merely to follow him outwardly but from the depths of their hearts too.⁵³

Thus obeying the Prophet (sws) is not merely a ritual. The Qur'ān requires from a believer to obey him with the spirit of following him and with full sincerity and full reverence and devotion. If a person wants to achieve God's love, he has to obey and follow the Prophet (sws):

فُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَحْبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحِبِّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٣١:٣)

Tell them: "If you love God, follow me; God will love you and forgive your sins and [you know this well that] God is Most-Forgiving and Ever-Merciful." (3:31)

The Prophet (sws) has explained this reality in various ways. In one narrative, he is reported to have said: "The faith in a person does not stand validated unless he prefers me to his father, sons and all others."⁵⁴

The etiquette taught to the Bedouin tribes that had come from the nearby areas of Madīnah regarding their interaction with the Prophet Muhammad (sws) also clearly highlights this status of a prophet:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُنَادِمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَنْقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلَيْمٌ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَرْفَعُوا أَصْوَاتَكُمْ فَوْقَ صَوْتِ النَّبِيِّ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا لَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ كَجَهْرٍ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ أَنْ تَحْبِطَ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَأَتُنْهِي لَا تَشْعُرُونَ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَعْضُوْنَ أَصْوَاتَهُمْ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ امْتَحِنَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِلتَّقْوَى لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَحْرَزُ عَظِيمٌ (٤٩ : ٣ - ١)

Believers! Do not give preference to your opinion before God and His Prophet. Have fear of God. Indeed, God hears and knows all. Believers! Do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet nor address him in a loud voice as you do to one another, lest your deeds should come to nothing and you are not even aware of this. [Remember] those who speak gently in the presence of God's prophet are the very people whose hearts God has chosen for nurturing piety. For them is forgiveness and a great reward. (49:1-3)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī writes:

These verses instruct the Muslims about the etiquette which must necessarily be observed by them before the Prophet (sws). They say that those who keep their voices subdued in the presence of the Prophet (sws) are the ones whom

53. Ibid., vol. 2, 329.

54. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 6, (no. 15); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 41, (nos. 168, 169).

the Almighty has chosen for nurturing piety in their hearts. The word انتخَنَ (to test) here actually encompasses the meaning of the word اصْحَافَ (to select) or of some similar word. It is evident from this that not every heart is appropriate before God for cultivating and fostering the seed of piety; He, in fact, selects hearts for this purpose by putting them through a trial, and the real basis of His selection in this trial is whether a person has sincere emotions of obedience and true humility towards the Prophet (sws). The more a person has these things, the more is he blessed with piety and the more a person is devoid of them, the farther away is he from piety. The mention of raising one's voice, as we have referred to before, is as an indicator of one's inner-self. A person who tries to raise his voice over that of some other person actually counts himself superior to him. This attitude closes the doors to access the knowledge and wisdom of others. If a student adopts this attitude before his teacher, then he will deprive himself from what he can learn from him. Similarly, if someone adopts this attitude with the messenger of God, He will not only deprive himself from the prophetic guidance but also from the God-granted urge to do so because a messenger is a representative of God.⁵⁵

x. Intercession of the Prophets

The real obligation of a prophet is to warn people of the fate – good or bad – that awaits them in the Hereafter; however, besides this, he also intercedes for his people before God. When a person wants to seek forgiveness from the Almighty then joining him in beseeching God for this forgiveness is called intercession. This is the real meaning of intercession. Thus without a person first taking the initiative in seeking forgiveness from God, it has no basis. A person who intercedes for someone is one who seeks forgiveness together with him and is another voice raised for this purpose and he in fact becomes a means for him in imploring and supplicating before God. The Qur'ān says:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا يَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ لَوْلَا رُؤُوسُهُمْ وَرَأْيُهُمْ يَصْدُونَ وَهُمْ مُسْتَكِبُرُونَ (٥٠:٦٣)

And when they are told: "Come, God's Messenger will seek forgiveness for you," they wave their heads and you see them drawing away in arrogance. (63:5)

The first instance of intercession arises when a person professes faith, a prophet seeks forgiveness for him. The second instance arises when he commits a sin and after repenting seeks forgiveness from God. The Hypocrites of the times of the Prophet (sws) were, at one instance, urged by God to seek forgiveness from God themselves and also request the Prophet (sws) to do so if they wanted to repent from their sins. If they ask the Prophet (sws) for this, then this would be instrumental in directing God's mercy towards them. The Qur'ān says:

55. Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 7, 489.

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ جَآءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوْجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيمًا (٤:٦٤)

And if they, having wronged themselves, had come to you and sought God's forgiveness and the Messenger had also sought God's forgiveness for them, they would have certainly found God Forgiving and Merciful. (4:64)

At various places, the Qur'an has urged people to seek forgiveness from the Almighty. In 39:53 and 12:87 it is said: "My servants! If you have wronged your souls do not lose hope of My mercy. Your Lord is Most Forgiving and Ever Merciful. If you turn to Him, He will forgive your sins. Remember! Believers never lose hope of His mercy." The Almighty has also explained His law about accepting repentance in 4:17-18: A person should repent as soon as he can after he commits a sin. This is because He never punishes people who while being overcome with emotions commit a sin and then repent immediately. However, He does not forgive people who deeply indulge in sin all their lives and when they see death approaching start to repent and seek forgiveness from the Almighty.

A little deliberation on the contents of these verses shows that the Almighty has not mentioned what will happen to people who after sinning do not repent immediately, yet do not delay repentance till their death. It is these people about whom one can expect intercession. Thus the Qur'an has affirmed this, and has also negated all the incorrect views that people formed about intercession which actually contradict God's justice and His reward and punishment for people.

The first thing asserted is that only God has the authority of intercession. Without His permission, no one can intercede for anyone. So much so, even the angels who are very close to Him cannot take the initiative in saying anything on their own. Thus it is essential to first please God so that intercession is allowed by Him and then also accepted:

أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ شُفَعَاءَ قُلْ أُولَئِكُنَّا كَانُوا لَا يَمْلِكُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ قُلْ لَلَّهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ جَمِيعًا لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٣٩: ٤٣-٤٤)

Have they chosen others besides God to intercede for them? Tell them: "Can they intercede even if they have no power nor understanding?" Tell them: "Only God has authority over intercession. His rule extends over the heavens and the earth. Then to Him shall you be returned." (39:43-44)

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُّكَرَّمُونَ لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ (٢١: ٢٦-٢٧)

And they say: "The Merciful has children." Glory be to God! They are but [His] honoured servants. They do not speak first before Him and obey only His directives. (21:26-27)

The second thing in this regard is that even after being permitted by God to speak, intercession shall be possible only for those about whom God pleases. No one shall be able to say anything about anyone out of his own will:

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يَسْتَعْنُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنِ ارْتَضَى وَهُمْ مِنْ خَشِّبَتِهِ مُشْفِقُونَ (٢٨:٢١)

He knows what is before them and behind them. And they intercede for none except those whom He permits and tremble in awe of Him. (21:28)

يَوْمَئِذٍ لَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذْنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ وَرَضِيَ لَهُ قَوْلًا يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا (٢٠ : ١٠٩ - ١١٠)

On that Day, no intercession will avail except for him who is allowed by the Merciful and words about that person are acceptable to Him. He knows what is before them and behind them, and their knowledge cannot truly embrace Him. (20:109-110)

The third thing is that the person who is acceptable to God to be interceded for – about him too whatever will be allowed to be said would be the absolute truth:

لَا يَتَكَلَّمُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذْنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَانُ وَقَالَ صَوَابًا (٧٨ : ٣٨)

[On that Day], only they will speak whom the Merciful permits and they will say the truth. (78:38)

This is the point of view of the Qur’ān regarding intercession. All narratives on this topic should be understood in the light of this view of the Qur’ān and anything which contradicts this view should be ignored regarding it to be the handiwork of the narrators.

xi. Finality of Prophethood

For centuries, prophets continued to come in every nation. The purpose of their advent was to communicate the truth to such an extent before their addressees that they are left with no excuse to reject it. When the arrangement of this conclusive communication of the truth became possible at the global level by the manifestation of God’s reward and punishment in this world, the process of prophethood was terminated forever. It began with Adam (sws) until the time came when in one branch of the descendants of Abraham (sws), the Ishmaelites, the Prophet Muhammad (sws) arrived and the Qur’ān declared that he was the final Prophet and after him there would be no prophet or messenger. Although this was evident from the predictions of various prophets but it was mentioned in the Qur’ān at the instance when the Almighty asked the Prophet (sws) to marry the divorced wife of Zayd ibn al-Hārithah (rta). This directive was given to reform an evil custom of the *jāhiliyyah* period regarding adopted children. Consequently, it was said that since he is the last Prophet, it is essential that this

evil custom be set right through him. Had there been another prophet after him, the Almighty could possibly have delayed this matter. Since this was not to be the case, the Prophet Muhammed (sws) had to fulfil this responsibility:

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّنْ رِجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّنَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا
(٤٠:٣٣)

Muhammad is the father of no man among you but he is the Prophet of God and the seal of the prophets and God has knowledge of all things. (33:40)

One expression used in this verse is خاتم النبيين (*khātam al-nabiyīn*). The word خاتم (*khātam*) in Arabic means “a seal”. The Prophet (sws) is called خاتم النبيين (*khātam al-nabiyīn*) (the seal of the prophets) in this verse. When this word is used the way it is here, it always means to close and seal something. Here too it means that through Prophet Muhammed (sws), the institution of prophethood has been sealed. There is now no possibility of the advent of any further prophet or messenger.

No doubt a seal is also used to testify to something. Linguistic principles dictate that here this word cannot in any way be used in this meaning. However, if someone insists that the word has been used in this meaning and if for the sake of discussion we accept this view, then too the result would be no different. In this case, the verse would mean that without his testimony, no one's prophethood can be accepted. No doubt that we profess faith in prophets prior to Muhammed (sws) because of his own testimony about them, and this is also a reality that he has neither foretold the advent of any prophet after him nor given such a testimony. In fact, he has repeatedly declared in clear and explicit words that he himself is the last of the prophets. Furthermore, he has also made it clear that not only the rank and position of prophethood has been terminated, its essence has also been terminated. Thus no possibility remains for a person to receive divine revelations or visions or to converse and come in contact with God. After the termination of the institution of prophethood, all these things have ended too.

Following are the sayings of the Prophet (sws) in this regard:

I

كَانَتْ بُنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ تَسْوِيْهُمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءُ كُلُّمَا هَلَكَ نَبِيٌّ خَلَفَهُ نَبِيٌّ وَإِنَّهُ لَا نَبِيَّ بَعْدِي وَسَيَكُونُ خُلَفَاءُ

Leaders of the Israelites were their prophets. When one prophet would pass away, another would succeed him. But there will be no prophet after me; there will only be successors.⁵⁶

II

إِنَّ مَثِيلِي وَمَثَلَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ مِنْ قَبْلِي كَمَثَلِ رَجُلٍ بَنَى فَأَحْسَنَهُ وَأَحْمَلَهُ إِلا مَوْضِعَ لَبْنَةٍ مِنْ زَاوِيَةٍ فَجَعَلَ

56. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 581-582, (no. 3455).

الناس يَطْوُفُونَ بِهِ وَيَعْجِبُونَ لَهِ وَيَقُولُونَ هَلَا وَضِعَتْ هَذِهِ الْبَنَةُ قَالَ فَأَنَا الْبَنَةُ وَأَنَا خَاتَمُ النَّبِيِّينَ

I and the prophets before me can be likened to a person who constructed a beautiful building but in a corner there was a gap for a brick. People would roam around this building and express their wonder on it and would ask: “Why was this brick not placed at its place.” He said: “I am that brick and I am the seal of the prophets.”⁵⁷

III

لَمْ يَقِنْ مِنَ النُّبُوَّةِ إِلَّا الْمُبَشِّرَاتُ قَالُوا وَمَا الْمُبَشِّرَاتُ قَالَ الرُّؤْيَا الصَّالِحةُ

“Nothing remains of prophethood except for things which give glad tidings.”⁵⁸
They asked: “What are these?” He replied: “Good dreams.”

4. Belief in Divine Books

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنْ كُلِّ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا (١٣٦:٤)

Believers! Have faith in God and His Messenger, in the Book He has revealed to His Messenger, and also in the Book He has previously revealed and [remember that] he who denies God, His Angels, His Books and His Prophets and the Last Day has strayed far. (4:136)

Just as the Almighty has sent prophets to guide mankind, similarly He has revealed His Books to these prophets for this purpose. The purpose of these Books is that people have with them the written guidance of God in His very words so that they can judge between what is right and what is wrong through these Books and are able to resolve their differences through them, and in this manner they are able to adhere to the truth regarding their religion. The Qur’ān says:

وَأَنَّزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحُكِّمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ (٢١٣ : ٢)

And with these [prophets], He sent down His Book as the decisive truth so that it may settle these differences between people. (2:213)

وَأَنَّزَلَنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ (٥٧:٥٧)

And with these [messengers], We sent down Our Book which is the Judge [between the right and the wrong] so that [through it] people are able to adhere to justice [regarding religion]. (57:25)

57. Ibid., 595, (no. 3535).

58. Ibid., 1206, (no. 6990).

At this point of time, the anthology of books found in the Bible shows that apparently these Books were given to each and every prophet in some form or the other. Just as the Qur'ān (87:19) mentions the Torah and the Gospel, it also refers to the scripture of Abraham (sws). The above quoted verses (2:213; 57:25) also corroborate this premise. All these Books are Books of God. Thus the Qur'ān requires of the Muslims to broadly profess faith in these Books without any discrimination. Out of these, however, four Books occupy exceptional importance: The Torah, the Psalms, the Gospel, the Qur'ān. The following paragraphs introduce these Books.

i. The Torah

The Torah was revealed to Moses (sws). It is generally thought to be composed of five books which are found at the beginning of the Bible and which are called the Pentateuch. They are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. A deep deliberation on these books shows that the content of the first four books is historical narration in which the Torah is found in the chronological order, and in Deuteronomy the Torah has been arranged in the form of a book in the same manner as the Qur'ān was. In its present shape, it was probably compiled in the fifth century BC. However, the way the Prophet Jesus (sws) has referred to it, one can say that it has his corroboration to some extent. The Hebrew text of the Torah which is now found in manuscripts and published form is called the Massoretic Text. It is generally accepted that besides this text there were other variants also in ancient times and at places there were important differences between them. The Samaritan Pentateuch and specially the oldest version of the Torah from the Greek Septuagint show evidence of these differences.

The guidance of God provided by the prophets to mankind has two categories: the *shari'ah* (the law) and the *hikmah* (the wisdom). It is the *shari'ah* which constitutes the major portion of the Torah and thus it is named so on this basis. The Qur'ān calls it هُدًى لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيل (٢:١٧) (the guidance for the Israelites, (17:2)) and تَفْصِيلًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ (٦:١٥٤) (the detail of everything, (6:154)). The Qur'ān also says that it contains the directive of God (5:43), it is guidance and light (5:44) and is mercy for the people (7:154). No doubt the Qur'ān (5:13) also mentions the interpolations of the Jews; however, this also is a reality that it broadly corroborates its version which was available with the Jews in the times of Muhammad (sws).

ii. The Psalms

The Psalms is the name of the book revealed to David (sws). It is a collection of hymns which are called Psalms. The Book of Psalms now found in the Bible has five books and one hundred and fifty Psalms. Although psalms attributed to other people have also found their way in this collection, but a discerning mind can feel the grandeur of a divine discourse in hymns about which it has been specified that they are from David (sws). Like the Gospel, it is the *hikmah* which constitutes the Psalms and the Qur'ān corroborates it as a book revealed by God.

iii. The Gospel

The Gospel was revealed to Jesus (sws). One of primary objectives of his advent was to give glad tidings of the last Prophet. The word “Gospel” means “good news” and on this very basis it has been named so. As has been the case of divine scriptures, it too was revealed piecemeal keeping in view the needs of preaching and propagation. Before it could be compiled in the form of a Book, Jesus (sws) was lifted from this earth because of the rebellious and arrogant behaviour of his people. Thus it is not an arranged Book but independent orations and speeches which have reached later generations through oral tradition and written memorandums. Many years later, when people started to compile the biography of Jesus (sws) in the form of booklets, these orations were appropriately inserted at various places. These booklets are called the Gospels. In the early days of Christianity, they were present in large number. In 382 AD, the leaders of the Christian church under Pope Damasus selected four of them and abandoned the others and regarded them to be apocryphal. In the Bible, we find the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They were originally written in Greek whereas the language of Jesus (sws) was Aramaic and he delivered his speeches and sermons in this language. The authors of these Gospels converted to Christianity much later than Jesus (sws) and none of these was written before 70 AD and the Gospel according to John was perhaps written a century after Jesus (sws) in the city of Ephesus in Asia minor. In spite of this, the sermons, parables and speeches that are found in these Gospels are so conspicuous in divine grandeur that any person aware of the style of divine literature cannot deny them. Thus it can safely be said that a greater part of the Gospel in which the Qur’ān asks us to profess faith is preserved in these biographical booklets.

iv. The Qur’ān

This was revealed to Muhammad (sws), the last Prophet of God. It is regarded as the *mīzān* (scale that tells good from evil) and the *furqān* (distinguisher between good and evil) by the Almighty in the Qur’ān itself (42:17; 25:1) and a *muhaymin* on the previous scriptures. The word *muhaymin* is an adjective formed from the words هَيْمَنْ فُلَانْ عَلَى كَذَا which means “a guardian” and “a protector”. It means that the Qur’ān is the real authentic and trustworthy version of the Book of God. Thus, in matters of religion, everything accepted or rejected shall be decided under the guidance of the light provided by it.

وَأَنَزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدِيهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيِّمًا عَلَيْهِ فَاحْكُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ (٤٨:٥)

And [O Prophet!] We have revealed to you the Book with the truth in confirmation of the Book before it, and standing as a guardian over it. Therefore, give judgement among them according to the guidance revealed by God and do not yield to their whims by swerving from the truth revealed to you. (5:48)

It consists of 114 *sūrahs*, most of which form pairs with regard to their contents. They are composed in seven sections in accordance with the sequence of the preaching endeavour of the Prophet (sws). Its language is Arabic and it has been revealed to the heart of the Prophet (sws) with the directive of God. The Prophet (sws) presented it to his people and from them it was transferred through the consensus and through the verbal and written perpetuation of the Muslims. Consequently, in divine literature, this is the only Book about which it can be said with full certainty that it is present with us in its original form, shape, language and arrangement without the slightest bit of change. The way it has been transmitted through *tawātur* (perpetuation) is a miracle in itself because this is the only Book in this world which even at this time can be read out verbatim from its beginning to the end by thousands who have memorized it. History tells us that in the last fourteen hundred years this mode of transmission has not ceased for a single day. It is evident from this that it is the Almighty Who has made arrangements to protect the Qur’ān. He says:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَرَأَلَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ (٩:١٥)

It was We that revealed the Reminder, and shall Ourselves preserve it. (15:9)

A similar verse reads:

وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ لَّا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدِيهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَرِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ (٤١: ٤٢-٤١)

And there is no doubt that it is a mighty scripture. Falsehood cannot reach it neither from in front of it nor from behind it. It is a revelation from a wise and glorious God. (41:41-42)

The various aspects of protection of the Qur’ān towards which this verse alludes to are explained thus by Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāḥī:

First, during the time of revelation of the Qur’ān the Almighty made arrangements that the devils are unable to interfere in the process of divine revelation in any way. Although there is a permanent arrangement to prevent the devils from eavesdropping and listening to divine matters but ... during the time of the revelation of the Qur’ān, special arrangements were made in preventing devils from meddling in revelations in any way so that nothing is able to enter the Qur’ān from in front of it. (مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدِيهِ)

Second, the angel which the Almighty selected to reveal the Qur’ān has been called by the Qur’ān (81:20-21) as “the one endowed with power, held in honour before the Lord of the Throne, obeyed in Heavens, moreover trustworthy.” In other words, the angel is so powerful that evil spirits cannot overpower him; he is the head of all angels and he cannot forget anything. Whatever is entrusted to him by the Almighty, he fully protects. There is not

a semblance of a chance that the slightest of change can take place in the revelation entrusted to him. He has a very high rank before the Almighty which shows that he is ahead of all other creatures as far as abilities are concerned – It is obvious that all this elaborate arrangement has been made to close the doors to any evil entering the Qur’ān from its very origin.

Third, the very person who was entrusted with the Qur’ān was firstly, the best of human beings in all respects and secondly, the responsibility of memorizing, arranging and safeguarding the Qur’ān was taken up by the Almighty: لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ تَعْجِلَ بِهِ إِنْ عَلِيَّنَا حَمْمَةٌ وَقَرْآنُهُ فَإِذَا قَرْأَنَاهُ فَأَتَيْنَاهُ شَمَّا (٧٥: ١٦-١٩) (To acquire this Qur’ān [O Prophet!] Do not move your tongue hastily over it. Indeed, upon Us is its collection and recital. So when We have recited it, follow this recital [of Ours]. Then upon Us is to explain it [wherever need be], (75:16-19)).

It is evident from various narratives that whatever text of the Qur’ān would be revealed the Prophet (sws), his close Companions (rta) would memorize it. In every Ramadān, the Prophet (sws) would read it out to Gabriel or listen from him so that no possibility of any error or omission should remain and this reading out or listening to would be according to the sequence the Almighty had arranged it. Also evident from certain narratives is that in the last Ramadān of his life, this mutual presentation of the Qur’ān took place twice. Then in this very arrangement and recital the whole of the Qur’ān was written down and later the rightly guided caliphs sent its copies to various cities. This elaborate treatment was not received by any of the previous scriptures and about the Torah no one knows that when its constituent scriptures were assembled and who was responsible for this task.

Fourth, the Qur’ān is a miracle with regard to its eloquent selection of words and the meanings they convey. And so distinct is it in this aspect to other discourses that they cannot match it. So much so, the words of the Prophet (sws) himself – who was the recipient of the Qur’ān and as the most eloquent among everyone – could not rival it. Thus there is no possibility that any extraneous addition be made into it. Consequently, works of people who have dared to answer the challenge of the Qur’ān to bring something similar to it are preserved in history and literature. If a person compares them with the Qur’ān, he will notice the same difference between them as between a pearl and a pebble. In this manner, it is as if the doors to any adulteration from the rear too (مِنْ خَلْفِهِ) have been closed.

Fifth, together with the promise of protecting the Qur’ān, the Almighty has also promised to protect and safeguard its language till the Day of Judgement. Because of the fact that the languages of some divine scriptures became extinct a lot of changes and interpolations were introduced by way of translations and we have no clue about them now. However, the real

language of the Qur'ān is safe and sound and will remain so till the Day of Judgement. Hence there is no possibility of any evil creeping into it by way of translations and commentaries. If anyone tries to introduce some evil in it, men of learning can easily sift it out by testing it against the original text.⁵⁹

5. Belief in the Hereafter

إِذَا زُلْزَلتُ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا وَأَخْرَجَتُ الْأَرْضُ أَثْقَالَهَا وَقَالَ إِلِّي نَسَانٌ مَا لَهَا يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا
بَأَنَّ رَبَّكَ أَوْحَى لَهَا يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْدُرُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَائًا لِيَرَوْا أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَمَنْ يَعْمَلُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ
وَمَنْ يَعْمَلُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ (٩٩:١-٨)

[They should remember the Day] when the earth is shaken the way it should be shaken, and it casts forth its burdens. And man cries out: "What is the matter with her?" On that Day, she will narrate all her story at the intimation of your Lord. On that Day, men will issue forth individually so that their deeds can be shown to them. Then whoever has done the smallest bit of good he also shall see it, and whoever has done the smallest bit of evil, he also shall see it. (99:1-8)

Belief in the Hereafter is one of the most important tenets of Islam. It occupies the central position in the preaching mission of prophets. It is on the foundation of this belief that the pillars of *sharī'ah*, virtue and righteousness stand. Prophethood is also based on it. A *nabī* (prophet) is a *nabī* because he actually foretells this *al-nabā' al-azīm* (the great news).⁶⁰ A *rasūl* (messenger) is a *rasūl* because he brings the message of its advent. John (sws) and Jesus (sws), Moses (sws) and Abraham (sws) all have proclaimed it. The Torah tacitly refers to it and the Psalms clearly mention it. In the Gospel, Jesus (sws) has warned that on the Day of Judgement only those people will enter the Kingdom of Heaven who will please his heavenly father. The Qur'ān is a bearer of warnings and glad tidings for this Day. It says that the manner in which people wake up from sleep (39:42), the manner in which rain enlivens a dead and desolate terrain (7:57; 35:9), the manner in which a whole human being comes into existence from a mere drop of water (75:36-40), in the same manner mankind will be made to rise one day from their graves. Raising up mankind on that Day would not be of any bother for the Almighty. When the addressees of the Qur'ān expressed their wonder on being re-created and inquired after the being who would enliven these decayed bones, the Almighty replied in the Qur'ān (36:78) that the very being Who created them the first time would create them again. This whole process is as easy for Him as uttering a word for us is:

59. Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 7, 113.

60. This is a reference to the words of a Qur'ānic verse: 78:2. (Translator)

فَوَرَبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ لَحَقٌ مُّثُلٌ مَا أَنْتُمْ تَنْتَقِلُونَ (٢٣:٥١)

Thus, I swear by the Lord of heavens and the earth that this shall definitely come [with the same ease] as you speak. (51:23)

The Qur'ān says that it is man's own nature, his quest for justice and his awareness of good and evil that requires the coming of a Day of Judgement. If God is just and fair, then such a day must come. His providence, mercy, power and wisdom as well as His laws and practices all entail that man face a day of accountability. Without belief in such a day, religion is mere wishful thinking. The concepts of virtue, piety, justice, reward and punishment become baseless. Without such a day, the universe has no purpose and can only be regarded as the playground of divine forces.

The testimonies, indications, sites and events of this day are described both in the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. In the following paragraphs, these details are mentioned.

i. The Testimonies

The first thing is man's awareness of good and evil. It is because of this awareness that his chiding conscience rebukes him on every evil. It is a small court of justice which is found within every person which delivers its unbiased verdict at all times. Whether he accepts it or not, a person is able to clearly listen to this verdict after every blemish that emanates in his thoughts and deeds; this continues until he becomes so deeply involved in evil that this evil completely surrounds his faculties thereby lulling the calls of his conscience to sleep. This internal system of rebuke is a testimony of his own inner-self and is called the testimony of the rebuking-self. The Qur'ān presents it and tells man that he will not be left unaccountable for whatever he does. He should know that just as there exists a lesser abode of judgement within man, similarly a greater abode of judgement will one day be set up for the whole world; when it takes place, he will be held accountable before his Lord and rewarded and punished accordingly on the basis of his deeds. If a person denies such a day of accountability, then it is like denying himself and playing mischief before one's conscience:

لَا أُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ الْلَّوَامَةِ أَيْحَسِبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ نَجْعَمَ عِظَامَهُ بَلْ قَادِرِينَ عَلَى
أَنْ نُسُوّي بَنَاهُ بَلْ يُرِيدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ يَسْأَلُ أَيَّانَ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَإِذَا تَرَقَ الْبَصَرُ وَخَسَفَ الْقَمَرُ
وَجُمِعَ الشَّمَسُ وَالْقَمَرُ يَقُولُ الْإِنْسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَيْنَ الْمَفْرُ كَلَّا لَّا وَزَرَ إِلَيْ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمُسْتَقْرُ يُنْبَأُ
الْإِنْسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِمَا قَدَّمَ وَآخَرَ بَلْ الْإِنْسَانُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ وَلَوْ أَلْقَى مَعَاذِيرَهُ (٧٥:١-١٥)

By no means! I present as evidence the Day of Judgement itself. And [they think that the Day of Judgement is a far-fetched reality]. By no means! I present as evidence [this] reproaching soul within you. Does man think that We will not be able to bring together his bones? Why not? We can put together his very finger tips. [No this is not so]; in fact [the truth is that] man wants to be mischievous before his [conscience]. He asks: "When will the

Day of Judgement be?" But on the day when the sight is dazed and the moon eclipsed and the sun and the moon brought together, this very man will say: "Whither to flee?" – No! there is no refuge now! Towards your Lord that Day is the resting place. On that Day, man will be informed what he sent forth and what he left behind. [No he cannot deny it]; in fact, he himself is a witness upon his own self however much he may put up excuses. (75:1-15)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī, while explaining this argument of the Qur'ān, writes:

Now the question is that if a person has a guardian within his conscience which chides him on every evil that emanates from him, then how can it be imagined that man will be not be held accountable for his deeds. Why would he go scot-free if he spends a life in whatever manner he wants to while negating the calls of his conscience? If a person will not be held accountable for his deeds, then where has this chiding conscience come into him from? If his Creator is unconcerned about the good and evil which emanates from him, then why and from where has He given him the feeling of being elated at a good deed and being pricked by his conscience at a bad one? Then from here another question arises: If God has set up a miniature court of justice in every person, then why will He not set up a greater court of justice which will hold the whole world accountable for good and evil which emanate from it and not reward and punish people accordingly? Any person who deliberates on these questions while disregarding his desires will reach the conclusion that the very being of a person bears witness that he has innate knowledge of good and evil; he will not be left unaccountable; there definitely shall come one day when he will be punished for any misdeeds he may have done and be rewarded for his good deeds. To remind a person of this very Day, the Almighty has placed a miniature court of justice within a person's soul so that man does not remain indifferent to it, and if ever he becomes indifferent he can catch a glimpse of it by merely reflecting on his inner-self. It is this very reality which sages have taught us by saying that man is a miniature world and within this miniature world there is a reflection of the greater world. If a person has a true comprehension of his own self, he is able to comprehend both God and the Hereafter.⁶¹

The second thing is the nature of man by virtue of which he likes justice and dislikes injustice. No doubt, in spite of this dislike he still perpetrates injustice but this is not because he is not able to distinguish justice from injustice or that he likes the latter – it is because he loses his balance and poise by being overcome with desires and emotions. All of us know that a person may want to steal from another person's house but he would never like someone to steal from his own house; he may kill someone but would never like that anyone take his

61. Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 9, 80.

life or that of his relatives. Similarly, a person may be dishonest in weighing his merchandise for others but would never be happy if others are dishonest with him in this regard. If one asks these thieves, killers and swindlers about their actions they would confess that each of these is a crime and should be eliminated. Thus no one in his senses can regard good and evil to be equal or that both be dealt with in the same manner. The Qur'ān presents these facts and asks the rejecters of the Day of Judgement:

أَفَتَحْجِلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَالْمُهْرِمِينَ مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ (٦٨: ٣٥-٣٦)

Are We to deal with those who submit to Us as We deal with those who transgress? What is the matter with you? What is this judgement you give? (68:35-36)

The third thing is the incompleteness found both in man and in this world. From whatever aspect these two are seen, it is clearly evident that in every single part of theirs the great power and wisdom of their maker is apparent. In everything great meaningfulness, matchless order and sequence, unrivalled mathematical perfection and symmetry, extra-ordinary thoroughness and immense beauty of creativity astounds one's intellect. On the other hand, if one tries to understand both of them in their totality, one sees great incompleteness and lack of purpose in them.

Consequently, man observes that everything through its very existence proclaims that it has been created for him, but nothing in this world tells him his own purpose of creation.

Also, one is not able to see any system which judges if human beings have or have not fulfilled the purpose, if ever there is one, for which they have been created.

Man is innately aware of the fact that he should be held accountable for each favour he has been blessed with; however, he has been left in this world without any such accountability. Thus when he dies, he calmly leaves this world without giving any account of these favours.

To make people adhere to truth and justice is the need of mankind, but man is not able to see any real motive for this in himself or in the world around him. Then the circumstances of this world negate what his conscience desires. It is his natural instinct that justice and oppression and good and evil must be discriminated; however, in this world, this natural instinct of his is flouted in the worst possible way. Thus, there are many people who have left this world without being rewarded for their good deeds and there are many who have left this world without being punished for their evil deeds.

Contrary to all other creations like plants, animals and inorganic objects, man possesses an awareness of the future; however, this future always eludes him.

Hidden within him are great desires, but seldom are they fulfilled and often his wishes do not materialize. So much so, the intense desire of observing God running the affairs of this universe once he professes faith in Him is never

fulfilled in this world.

Man is not able to go to the extent his imagination can take him. He wants to pierce the skies, penetrate the earth and infiltrate into his own soul as far as he can. To satisfy his ambitions, he has tried to explore the skies and split the atom; however, all this effort has only proven to him that he cannot realize all the potentials of his imagination.

He is always searching for a world in which he can liberate himself from the sorrows and hardships of this world and from its limitations and live a life of happiness and contentment. This desire is found in him since time immemorial. However, he is never able to obtain this sought after world of his; on the contrary, he takes to his grave these cherished desires.

Every single word which a person speaks and every single deed that emanates from him are being safely recorded so that they can be recalled whenever required. All his good and evil thoughts are also permanently noted. The passage of time and change in circumstances do not affect these records. However, what is the purpose of this arrangement? Nothing in this world answers this question.

The personality of a human being has an existence of its own which is independent of his corporal being. The innumerable cells from which his body is made keep dying and are replaced every now and then; however, his real personality always remains intact. His knowledge, memory, ambitions, habits and thoughts all remain the same, and are in no way altered by this cycle. Then where does this personality come from and where does it go? We are unable to answer this question too.

Millions of planets, much larger than the planet man inhabits, exist in the universe but there appears no trace of any life in them. Then why have they been created? Man does not know.

These facts are irrefutable. After this, there can only be two possibilities: first, to regard this world as a meaningless place and come to the conclusion that it is the workmanship of a merry-maker and nothing more; second, to understand it in combination with a Day of Judgement and that eternal kingdom of God which has been so vehemently affirmed and declared by His prophets. What is the verdict of intellect? Every person can comprehend:

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَّاتًا وَأَنْكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ تَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ لَمَّا إِلَيْهِ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ
الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ (٢٣: ١١٥-١١٦)

So do you think that We have created you in vain and that to Us you would never be returned? So very lofty is the status of God, the true king. There is no god but Him, the Lord of the glorious throne. (23:115-116)

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا يَنْهِمَا لَاعِينَ لَوْ أَرَدْنَا أَنْ تَتَّخِذَ لَهُوَا لَاتَّخَذْنَاهُ مِنْ لُدُنَّا إِنْ كُنَّا
فَاعِلِينَ (٢١: ١٦-١٧)

And it was not for gaming and sport that We created the heavens and the earth

and all that lies between them. Had it been Our will to create a game, We could have found one near at hand if We wanted to do this. (21:16-17)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, while interpreting these verses, writes:

... mentioned here is the reason that if after this world there is no Day of Judgement, it has always remained in existence and will continue like this forever, whether anyone does virtuous deeds or bad ones or does oppression or justice and its Creator is unconcerned about the good and evil found in it, then this only means that He has created an amusement to entertain Himself: He will amuse Himself with it till whenever He likes, and when He gets bored, He will just end it and create some new amusement for Him for His enjoyment and pastime. The verse therefore stresses that the heavens and the earth and what is between them have not been created for amusement. From the very way it is, this world bears testimony to the fact that it has been created by a just, wise and merciful being. It is not an object of amusement for a merry-maker or a warring place of supernatural beings or a theatre of a deity; in fact, every single object of this wisely created world bears witness that its creator has created it with a great purpose and it is an obvious requirement of His justice and wisdom that a day come when this purpose is fulfilled.⁶²

This is the judgement passed by sense and reason. However, as soon as one gets to know that the Hereafter exists all these questions get an answer and all voids are filled and all known phenomena are explained and everything becomes set in its place; the world now seems to be complete, which in the absence of the Hereafter it did not; the real grandeur of this universe is thus revealed; man can now die with the certainty that whatever he was not able to obtain before his death, he will definitely obtain it after his death; he too will be blessed with the certitude and the calm which is found in the universe; he will be given an eternal world in which he can realize his innumerable and unending desires and where, on the one hand, there will be the eternal Paradise of pleasure, finesse and meaningfulness, and, on the other, the Fire of Hell where the evil will endure their punishments.

As a result, the relationship between this world and the next is that of what each member of a pair has with the other. Consequently, if causes have been joined with effects, potentials with their devices, natures with their intentions and souls with bodies and as a result are presenting a meaningful whole, then the Hereafter too is one member of the pair of which the other member is the Herein and both complement one another and become meaningful:

وَمِن كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنَ لِعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ (٤٩:٥١)

And We have made pairs of everything so that you may take heed. (51:49)

62. Ibid., vol. 5, 132.

After this, the heart of every sensitive person shudders at the concept of accountability and it is as if he sees the Day of Judgement before his very eyes. He sees that the earth and the heavens are burdened with it in the very manner a pregnant lady carries the burden of her child about which it cannot be said when it shall be delivered:

يَسْأَلُوكُمْ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي لَا يُحَلِّيهَا لِوَقْتِهَا إِلَّا هُوَ شَقَّلَ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا تَأْتِي كُمْ إِلَّا بَعْتَدَةً (١٨٧:٧)

They ask you about the Hour of Doom: When will it come? Tell [them]: “Only my Lord has knowledge of it. None but He shall reveal it when its appointed time comes. Both the heavens and the earth are under its burden. It will suddenly overtake you.” (7:187)

Consequently, a person proclaims to God: “You have not made this world without a purpose; it is against Your grand wisdom and knowledge to do something without a purpose; I know that this world is going to end on a Day of Judgement where people who thought that this world is a place of amusement for its Creator will be punished. I seek refuge with You from such a fate”:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْخَلَافِ اللَّيلُ وَالنَّهَارُ لِآيَاتٍ لَّا يُؤْلِي الْأَبْيَابُ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قَيْمَانًا وَقَعُودًا وَعَلَى جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ (١٩١-١٩٠ : ٣)

In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are many signs for men of understanding; those who remember God while standing, sitting, and lying down, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth. [Their prayer is:] “Lord! You have not created this without a purpose. Glory be to You for you do not do anything in vain! Save us from the punishment of the Fire.” (3:190-191)

The fourth thing is the attributes of God the effects of which are evident in every speck of this universe. The attributes of providence and mercy in particular need one's attention. After witnessing the extra-ordinary arrangement made by the Lord of this world to nurture and nourish man, how can a person of intellect think that his Lord will leave him unaccountable and how can it be expected from the merciful and gracious God to not punish people who have made this world a place of oppression and injustice. For this very reason, the Qur'ān has pointed out at a number of places that the Day of Judgement is the consequence of God's providence and mercy, power and wisdom. After professing belief in God, no one can deny it.

In Sūrah An'am, it is said:

كَتَبَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ لِيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ (١٢:٦)

He has made mercy mandatory on Himself. He will definitely gather you to take you to the Day of Judgement about which there is no doubt. (6:12)

In Sūrah Nabā', it is said:

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْأَرْضَ مَهَادًا وَالْجِبَالَ أَوْتَادًا وَخَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلْنَا لَيْلًا لِبَاسًا وَجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا وَبَنَيْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعًا شَدَادًا وَجَعَلْنَا سَرَاجًا وَهَاجَارًا وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنْ الْمُعْصَرَاتِ مَاءً ثَجَاجًا لِنُخْرِجَ بِهِ حَبًّا وَبَنَيْنَا وَجَنَّاتٍ أَفَلَا فَإِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ كَانَ مِيقَاتًا (٧٨:٦-٧)

[They should behold:] Have We not made the earth a cradle and made the mountains [its] pegs? And not created you in pairs? And not made your sleep a means of comfort [for you]? And not made the night a clothing [for you] and the day a time to earn [your] livelihood? And not built above you seven sturdy [skies]? And not placed [in them] a glowing lamp [this sun]? And not sent down abundant water from dripping clouds that We may bring forth grain and vegetation and gardens of luxurious growth? [All this clearly testifies that] indeed the Day of Judgement has an appointed time. (78:6-17)

Similarly, in Sūrah Qāf, it is said:

أَقْلَمْ يَنْظُرُوا إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَوْقَهُمْ كَيْفَ بَنَيَاهَا وَرَبَّيَاهَا وَمَا لَهَا مِنْ فُرُوجٍ وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدَنَاهَا وَأَقْيَنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيًّا وَأَنْبَتَنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيجٌ تَبْصِرَةً وَذِكْرِي لِكُلِّ عَبْدٍ مُنْبِبٍ وَنَزَّلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً مُبَارَكًا فَأَنْبَتَنَا بِهِ جَنَّاتٍ وَحَبَّ الْحَصِيدِ التَّخْلُلَ بَاسِقَاتٍ لَهَا طَلْعٌ ثَضِيدٌ رِزْقًا لِلْعِبَادِ وَأَحَبَبْنَا بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَيْتَا كَذَلِكَ الْخُرُوجُ (٥٠:٦-١١)

Then have they never observed the sky above them how We have fashioned and adorned it and [not observed that] it is flawless. And We have spread the earth and set upon it mountains and brought forth in it all kinds of beautiful plants as an insight and reminder for every person who turns [towards the truth]. And We sent down blessed water from the skies with which We thence brought forth gardens and the harvest grain, and tall palm-trees stacked with clusters of dates as a means of sustenance for men and from it We enlivened a dead piece of land. Such shall you rise [from the earth]. (50:6-11)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, while explaining these verses, writes:

Here the Almighty has directed the attention of the rejecters of the Day of Judgement towards the obvious signs of His power, providence and wisdom which can be observed all around man. These signs are enough to create insight and strike a reminder in a person who has a heart which has the ability to turn towards the truth.

First, the Almighty has directed man's attention to His great power and wisdom: have they not seen the sky above them how it has been raised high and decked with stars? It is a miracle of God's power and wisdom that the immeasurable sky is free from the slightest of flaws. The implication is that how is it impossible for someone whose immense power and wisdom they see above them to create them again?

After this, besides His power and wisdom, the Almighty has directed man's attention to the tremendous system of providence and sustenance found around him. He is asked to observe how the Almighty has spread out the earth beneath their feet and to maintain its balance how He has nailed mountains into its expanse and how great a variety of fodder has He caused to grow from the earth. These plants which provide man with sustenance are also a means of satisfying his aesthetic taste. The implication is that can it be difficult for someone to re-create mankind from dust whose great signs of power, wisdom and providence they are witnessing all around them? Will the Almighty who has made elaborate arrangements for their sustenance leave them to eat, drink and be merry and never ask them of these blessings?⁶³

The fifth thing is the manifestation of God's judgement in this very world. It took place through prophets who were elevated to the status of messengers. The Almighty blessed them with extra-ordinary miracles, helped them through Gabriel and before the actual Day of Judgement set up through these messengers miniature Days of Judgement on this earth. The objective was to prove the existence of God and the Hereafter before the people in the very manner scientific facts are proven through empirical evidence in a laboratory. After this, obviously no one is left with an excuse before the Almighty to not accept the truth.

The methodology adopted for presenting this empirical evidence was that these messengers communicated the truth to their people and then declared that they will set up a court of justice for their people on behalf of the Almighty. The foretold reward and punishment on the basis of one's faith and deeds will take place for their people in this very world. Just as physical laws are unalterable and manifest come what may, in the same manner this moral law of God shall manifest itself before them once they are left with no excuse to deny the truth. Thus those among the people of these messengers who accept their calls shall attain salvation both in this world and in the next and shall be dominant on their adversaries. And those who reject these calls shall be humiliated and will receive divine punishment.

Whenever this prediction was made and about whichever people it was made, it was made in the most impossible and unbelievable of circumstances; however, it is an amazing historical reality that it came true whenever it was made and came true in such a manner that people in fact witnessed God administering

63. Ibid., vol. 7, 538.

justice and the heavens and the earth were filled with His majesty and grandeur. The Qur'ānic words used are: لَلَّا يَكُونُ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ (٤:١٦٥) (so that mankind after the coming of these messengers is left with no excuse against the Almighty, (4:165)). Then, as a general principle, it was stated:

وَكُلُّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولٌ فَإِذَا حَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قُضِيَّ بَنَاهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٤٧:١٠)

And for each community, there is a messenger. Then when their messenger comes, their fate it decided with justice and they are not wronged. (10:47)

It is evident from the Qur'ān that the first instance of this worldly judgement took place with the people of Noah (sws). Noah (sws) had warned them that if they do not give up polytheism and worship God only, they will soon be confronted with a punishment which would wipe them out from the face of the earth. His people responded by saying that it is because of this very stance of his that they think that he has gone far astray. They said that Noah (sws) had insulted their forefathers and now he even has the audacity to warn them of divine punishment. They expressed that his followers were from the lower cadres of the society who were blindly following him. Noah's rejoinder was that it was their misfortune if they were considering him to have gone astray; he continued that he had come to them as a messenger of God and whatever he is informing them of, he is informing them on the authority of God without any slightest of alteration; it is the message of God that he is delivering to them and he is doing so as a great well-wisher of them. If he is proclaiming to them this message in spite of their stubbornness, indifference, derision and animosity then it is only because he is fearful and sad that the Almighty might seize them for their misconduct.

The Qur'ān says that Noah (sws) continued to urge and exhort them to the truth for almost nine hundred and fifty years; however, in spite of this prolonged effort when his people rejected him and were not ready to reform themselves, the Almighty directed him to make a boat. This was in fact an ultimatum to the people that as soon as the boat is built, the respite they have been given would end. Consequently, when the boat had been made and all the believers embarked on it, a tumultuous storm ensued. The earth was directed to expel all its water on the surface and the sky was directed to rain down all its water. The water rose and stopped at the appointed mark and all of his people were drowned in it. Even Noah's son, Canaan, drowned because of his arrogance. The whole sight was serving a great warning to onlookers. Winds were blowing all around. Rain was thumping down. Waves as towering as the mountains were rising up. Noah's boat was battling with these gigantic waves when suddenly Noah (sws) saw his son standing in front of him overwhelmed with awe and wonder. Paternal love stirred at this sight and he called out to him that there is still a chance to board the boat and leave the rejecters. However, even this dreadful scenario was not enough for him to give up his stubbornness. He replied that he would seek refuge in some mountain. Noah (sws) warned that this is not mere water that he is facing: it is the wrath of God and no one except God can save him from it. While this conversation

was going on, a huge wave suddenly came and swept his son away. All other rejecters of Noah (sws) also met the same fate. This was the equitable judgement of the court of God. Only the believers were shielded from its punishment.⁶⁴

This was the first miniature day of judgement that took place to leave people with no excuse to deny the Hereafter. After this, every nation of the world encountered these miniature days of judgement. The accounts of ‘Ād, the Thamūd, the people of Shu‘ayb (sws), the people of Jonah (sws) besides some other nations which have been mentioned in the Qur’ān depict this very judgement. The Qur’ān says:

أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ بَنِي الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ قَوْمٌ نُوحٌ وَعَادٌ وَثَمُودٌ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا اللَّهُ جَاءُهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَرَدُوا أَدِيهِمْ فِي أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَقَالُوا إِنَّا كَفَرْنَا بِمَا أُرْسَلْنَا بِهِ وَإِنَّا لَفِي شَكٍّ مِمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٌ قَالَ رُسُلُهُمْ أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَدْعُوكُمْ لِيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ مِمَّنْ ذُنُوبُكُمْ وَبُؤْخِرُكُمْ إِلَى أَجْلٍ مُسَمًّى قَالُوا إِنَّا أَنْشَمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مُثْلُنَا ثُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَصْدُونَا عَمَّا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا فَأَتَوْنَا بَسْطَانَ مُبِينٍ قَالَتْ لَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ إِنَّ تَحْنُ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مُثْلُكُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ تَأْتِيَكُمْ بِسْطَانٌ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ... وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِرُسُلِهِمْ لَئِنْخِرِ حَنَّكُمْ مِمَّنْ أَرْضَنَا أَوْ لَتَعُودُنَّ فِي مَلَكِنَا فَأَوْحَى إِلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ لَنَهْلِكَنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ وَلَنُسْكِنَنَّكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامِي وَخَافَ وَعِيدِ (١٤:٩-١٤)

Have you not heard what befell those that have gone before you? The accounts of the people of Noah, ‘Ād, and Thamūd, and those who came after them whom only God knows? Their messengers came to them with clear signs, but they placed their hands on their mouths [-the mouths of messengers-] and said: “We will not accept the message with which you have been sent and have baffling doubts about that which you call us to.” Their messengers said: “Do you have doubts about God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth? He calls you to Him that He may forgive you your sins and give you respite till an appointed time.” They said: “You are but a human being like ourselves. You wish to stop us from worshipping the deities our fathers worshipped then bring us a clear miracle.” Their messengers replied: “We are indeed but mortals like yourselves. Yet God bestows His grace on such of His servants as He chooses and we do not have any authority of our own to present a miracle except by God’s permission ...” At last these rejecters told their messengers: “Return to our ways or we will banish you from our land.” Then their Lord revealed to them, saying: “We shall destroy these wrongdoers and then give you this land to dwell after them. [These are glad tidings for] those who are fearful of standing before me [one day] and those who fear My threat.” (14:9-14)

64. For details, see the following Qur’ānic verses: 7:59-64; 10:7-73; 11:25-49; 23:23-31; 26:105-120; 29:14-15; 37:75-82; 54:9-16.

The account of Moses (sws) related in the Qur’ān is also a depiction of this worldly judgement. When he presented the message of God before the Pharaoh and his supporters and they rejected this message, he demanded from them to let him and his people migrate from the land. The Pharaoh, however, did not accept this demand just as he did not accept his message. At this, the Almighty sent portent signs one after the other to admonish him after which he, with great hesitation, allowed them to go for a few days. However, when Moses (sws) set off with his people, he changed his opinion and embarked upon their pursuit with his armies. He thought that he would be able to compel them to return. However, the time had come for the decree of God to arrive. Hence, the judgement was delivered and was delivered with such majesty that it seemed as if the Almighty took them in His custody and made them cross the river while this potent ruler of his times and his armies were drowned in it.⁶⁵ Then within this great sign of God appeared another great sign: the corpse of the Pharaoh was not accepted by the river and was thrown out so that this could become a means of admonition and a lesson for tyrannical rulers of all times:

وَجَاءُونَا يَبْنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَاتَّبَعُهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ وَجَنُودُهُ بَعْيَا وَعَدُوًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَدْرَكَهُ الْعَرْقُ قَالَ آمَنَتُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الَّذِي آمَنَتُ بِهِ بُنُوٰ إِسْرَائِيلَ وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ آلَآنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ فَإِلَيْوْمَ نُنَحِّيكَ بِيَدَنَاكَ لَتَكُونَ لِمَنْ حَلَفَكَ آئِيَةً وَإِنْ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ عَنِ آيَاتِنَا لَغَافِلُونَ (١٠: ٩٢-٩٣)

And We led the Israelites across the sea, and the Pharaoh and his legions pursued them with wickedness and spite. Until when the Pharaoh started to drown, he cried: “I profess faith in the God in whom the Israelites have professed faith and I also am among His obedient people.” It is now that you have professed belief and before this you were a rebel and a mischief doer. We shall now save your body only so that you may become an exemplary sign for all posterity and in reality many remain indifferent to Our signs. (10:90-92)

A further step was taken in this regard by the Almighty that after Abraham (sws), He made his progeny a symbol of this worldly judgement. It was thus declared that if the progeny of Abraham (sws) stand by the truth and present with full certainty and with full clarity the truth the way it is before other people of the world, then they will be made dominant over these people in case they do not accept the truth, and if the progeny of Abraham (sws) deviates from the truth they shall suffer the humiliation of subservience through these very people of the world. The mountain of Olive and the village of Fig located on it and the mount Tūr at Sīnā and the city of Makkah are places where this worldly judgement took place for various nations and peoples. It is the mountain of Olives on which the punishment of the rejecters of Jesus (sws) was declared after his departure. The Almighty (Qur’ān, 3:55) declared that those who have professed faith in Jesus (sws) will always remain

65. For details, see the following verses of the Qur’ān: 7:103-136; 10:75-89; 17:101-103; 20:40-79; 23:45-48; 26:10-68; 28:36-40; 37: 114-119; 43:46-56; 51: 38-40; 79: 15-26.

dominant on the Israelites, and at various periods of history there will be people who will dominate them and give them humiliating punishments (Qur'ān, 7:167). Fig is a village situated on this mountain. It is mentioned in the Gospel of Luke (19:29) that when Jesus (sws) came to Jerusalem, he stayed at this place before entering the city. It is known that it was on the mount of Sinai that the Israelites were constituted as an *ummah*. Makkah was the place where the Ishmaelites began their life as a collectivity and it was here that they were given the custodianship of the Baytullāh, the first centre of worshipping God made on this earth. The Qur'ān has presented them as witnesses to this Judgement with the declaration that what is it that can negate the Day of Judgement after witnessing this worldly Judgement of the progeny of Abraham (sws):

وَالْقِرْبَانِ وَالرَّيْتَونِ وَطُورِ سَبِيلِنَ وَهَذَا الْبَلْدِ الْأَمِينِ لَقَدْ حَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافَلِينَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ عَيْرٌ مَمْنُونٌ فَمَا يُكَذِّبُكَ بَعْدُ بِالَّذِينَ لَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَحَقٌ الْحَاكِمُينَ (٩٥ - ٨)

The fig and olive bear witness and [so does] the mount of Sinai and this secure city of [yours] that We have created man [at these places] in the best of moulds. Then We reverted him to the lowest [position] when he himself wanted to become low. Save those who accepted faith and did righteous deeds. For them shall be a reward unending. Now [O Prophet!] What is it that denies you about the Day of Judgement? [Ask them:] is not Allah the best of Judges? (95:1-8)

The last time this miniature Day of Judgement took place was in seventh century AD. This amazing event of human history occupies extra-ordinary significance because it took place in the light of known history. Thus the minutest of details about it are preserved and all its phases are before us and anyone can witness them by turning the pages of history.

The Prophet who was selected for this was Muhammad (sws). As regards character and morality, he is unrivalled in the annals of mankind being the best of men epitomizing an ideal human being. He was designated as a Prophet at the age of forty. Prior to this, his life was so morally outstanding that he was called *ṣādiq* (the truthful) and *amīn* (the trustworthy) by his people. Each and every person of his nation was ready to bear witness that he was unflinching and incontestable in his honesty and trustworthiness and that he could never lie. Even after being designated as a Prophet, his people at all instances always bore witness to these aspects of his character even though they had become his dreadful enemies.

When for the first time he received divine revelation and he expressed his worry to his wife on this experience, she while comforting him said: "By God! Allah will never humiliate you because you are always kind to your kin and are always truthful and you bear the burden of others; you earn for the poor and are generous to guests and help those in distress."⁶⁶

66. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-sahīh*, 886-887, (no. 4953); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-sahīh*, 80-

He never sought revenge from anyone for his own self. So much so, even after subduing his greatest foes, he told them: "You are free, and I will not take any action against you."⁶⁷

His life was an unrivalled example of selflessness. The Quraysh offered him wealth, leadership and even their kingdom but he totally declined them and said: "If people place the sun on one hand of mine and the moon on the other, I will not give up my stance."⁶⁸

As the head of the Islamic state in Madīnah, he led the simplest of lives. In spite of this great change in his circumstances, he did not change his standard of living by the slightest.

In short, he was an outstanding person in every sphere and period of his life. Not a single example can be quoted in known history, in which a person in his practical life so perfectly adhered to the ideologies and objectives he set for himself. Wahīd al-Dīn Khān, a celebrated scholar of contemporary times, says: "So lofty was he as a human being that if he had not been born, historians would have written that a person who has such a personality as described above can only exist in fantasy and not in reality."⁶⁹

With this character and disposition, he called upon his people to profess true faith in God and in the Hereafter; however, they refused to accept it. He warned them that he is not merely a Prophet (*nabī*), he is a Messenger (*rasūl*) also and has been sent by God to set up a miniature Day of Judgement in this world for his people if they deny him even after being convinced of his veracity. This miniature judgement will be in line with and of the same sort which was delivered to the people of Noah (sws), Lot (sws), Shu‘ayb (sws), Sālih (sws) and Hūd (sws) by their respective messengers.

This was an extra-ordinary declaration. It meant that those who reject him would be punished by God and those who profess faith in him would necessarily prevail in the land of Arabia. When this declaration was sounded, except for a few close companions, he had no other supporters. Later also, he faced perilous times during the course of his struggle. His companions had to migrate to Abyssinia to seek refuge from the hostility of their enemies; they had to vacate Makkah forever and when they reached Madīnah, the whole of Arabia united to eliminate him and his message. Means such as power, money, propaganda and internal conspiracies were adopted to sabotage his mission. Every instant it seemed that enemies would be able to overpower and seize him. In these circumstances, it was very improbable that he would be able to prevail over his enemies; however, the Qur’ān in every situation assured him that he is the

81, (no. 403).

67. ‘Abd al-Mālik ibn Hishām ibn Ayyūb, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyyah*, 2nd ed., vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-khayr, 1995), 43.

68. Muḥammad ibn Ishāq al-Yasār, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyyah*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmīyyah, 2004), 196; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyyah*, vol. 1, 474.

69. Wahīd al-Dīn Khān, *Madhab awr Jadīd Challenge* (Lahore: Al-Maktabah al-shārafiyyah, n.d.), 143.

Messenger of God and, in spite of all this antagonism, God will have him prevail over his enemies:⁷⁰

بُرِيَّدُونَ لِيُطْفُؤُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ مُتُّمُ نُورِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ
بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينُ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كُلُّهُوكَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ (٦١: ٦٨-٩)

They seek to extinguish the light of God with their mouths and God has decided that He will perfect His light, much as the disbelievers may dislike it. It is He who has sent forth His messenger with guidance which is the religion of truth so that he may have it prevail over all religions [of Arabia], much as the idolaters may dislike it. (61:8-9)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَادِثُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ فِي الْأَذْلِيلَ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلَبِنَا أَنَا وَرُسُلِي إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ (٢٠-٢١)

Indeed those who are opposing Allah and His Messenger are bound to be humiliated. The Almighty has ordained: "I and My messengers shall always prevail." Indeed Allah is Mighty and Powerful. (58:20-21)

The Baytullāh was a sign of leadership for the people to whom the Prophet (sws) was sent. They were its custodians. No one could even imagine that one day he would remove them from its custodianship and the leadership of the Quraysh would one day be humbled before him. This was because of the extent of influence they commanded in Makkah and in its whereabouts. However, right at the instance they were planning to turn him out of Makkah, the Qur'ān declared:

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْهُرْ إِنْ شَانَكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتُرُ (٨: ١-٣)

[O Prophet!] Upon you have We bestowed this abundance of good [this House of Ours]. So pray only for your Almighty and offer sacrifice only for Him. Indeed, it is this enemy of yours who is rootless: none of his followers will remain. (108:1-3)

Then these concise words were explained and after naming Abū Lahab, the biggest foe of his call, the Qur'ān asserted:

تَبَثُّ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَثُّ مَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ سَيِّصْلَى تَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ وَامْرَأَهُ حَمَالَةُ
الْحَاطِبِ فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِنْ مَسَدٍ (١١١: ١-٥)

The hands of Abu Lahab have been broken and he himself has perished. Neither did his wealth benefit him nor the [good] he earned. Soon shall this man [of

70. See also: 6:4-5, 66-67, 158; 10:13, 102-103; 11:8; 13:40-41; 17:77, 18:57-58; 27:71-72; 37:171-173; 40:51, 77-78; 43:41-42; 46:35; 48:22-25, 28; 54:43-45; 92:21; 93:5; 94:5-6.

glowing countenance] be put in a glowing Fire and [with him] his wife also such that [in Hell] she will be carrying firewood on her back [for her own self]; [like a slave woman], there will be a twisted rope round her neck. (111:1-5)

What would happen after this? The Qur'ān mentioned each and every phase with great clarity: The help of God would come and Makkah would be conquered and the Prophet (sws) would see from his very eyes his people entering the folds of Islam in multitudes:

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرٌ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا فَسَيَّخْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ
إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَابًا (١١٠ : ٣ - ١)

When comes the help of God and that victory [which We have promised you O Prophet!] and you see men embrace the religion of God in multitudes, extol His glory while being thankful to Him and seek His forgiveness. For, indeed, He is ever disposed to mercy. (110:1-3)

At another instance, the words are even more clear:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَيْسَنْخَلْفَتْهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَ لَهُمْ دِيَرَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيَكِنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (٥٥:٢٤)

God has promised those of you who professed belief and did good deeds that He would grant them political authority in the land the way He granted political authority to those who were before them and He would strongly establish [here] their religion He chose for them, and replace their fear by peace. They will worship Me and serve none besides Me, and he who rejects even after this, will indeed be among the disobedient. (24:55)

These were not the words of a human being which have all the chances of not being materialized. They were the words of God which were spoken by His Messenger. Thus they materialized and became part of history – in fact, created history which has no parallel in the annals of this world. Consequently, the help of God arrived, the rule of the Prophet (sws) was established in Madīnah, the battle of Badr ensued and all hostile and antagonistic enemies of the Prophet (sws) were killed in it.⁷¹ Abū Lahab did not take part in the battle in an effort to save himself from torment. However, just seven days after the battle of Badr, this prediction of the Qur'ān was fulfilled word for word and this leader of the Banū Hāshim was killed by plague. And such was the condition of his dead body that no one came near it till three days after his death. Ultimately, his body got decomposed and a stinking smell started to come out from it. Eventually, his

71. Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyyah*, vol. 2, 265-272.

corpse was placed near a wall and covered with stones.⁷² Makkah was conquered, the custodianship of the Baytullāh was transferred to the Muslims, the rituals of the prayer and animal sacrifice were specifically offered for the Almighty only after the Baytullāh was cleansed of the idols, most Arabs became Muslims and every one saw with his very eyes people entering the folds of Islam in multitudes as predicted by the Qur’ān. Consequently, Islam found a hold in the society, the *shari‘ah* of God was enforced and thenceforth no other religion held dominance in Arabia. After this, people who still insisted on denial were vehemently told in 9th AH at the occasion of the grand *hajj* that once the sacred months pass, they shall have to face punishment and shall be executed where found.⁷³ After the death of the Prophet (sws), his successors conquered all the countries to whose heads the Prophet (sws) had written letters calling them to Islam. In these letters, he had told them that if they wanted peace they should accept Islam because after the truth has been conclusively communicated to them by the Messenger of God, they will have to live in subjugation and that their own independent states could no longer persist. Among these countries were Rome and Persia also about whose mutual conflict the Qur’ān, at one instance, had predicted that though the Romans have been subdued by the Persians, soon they will subdue the Persians and this amazing prediction of the Qur’ān was fulfilled word for word as were the other predictions it made.⁷⁴

ii. The Signs

When will the Day of Judgement come? The Qur’ān has made it clear that no one except God has knowledge of this. Only He knows when it will come and He has not disclosed this matter even to any of His prophets and angels (7:187, 20:15, 41:47). However, the signs and portents which will signal its advent are mentioned in the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth and also in previous divine scriptures. Some of these signs are very general and others are in the form of specific incidents and happenings. The signs of this first category are not mentioned in the Qur’ān. Only the Ḥadīth literature mentions them. Of the signs of the second category too, only one is mentioned in the Qur’ān: the onslaught of Gog and Magog. Therefore, this only is the certain sign. Other signs which are generally known in this regard are found in narratives which the scholars of Ḥadīth technically regard as *sahīh*. Some of these signs have already manifested themselves and others, if their ascription towards the Prophet (sws) is correct, shall definitely manifest themselves in future.

The signs of the first category relate to the moral degradation that will appear in the whole world before the Day of Judgement. Thus it is reported that knowledge will be lifted, ignorance will increase, fornication, drinking and killings and lootings would become rampant so much so that innocent people will be killed; women will outnumber men to the extent that the affairs of fifty

72. Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyah*, vol. 2, 479.

73. The Qur’ān, 9:5.

74. The Qur’ān, 30:1-6.

women will be entrusted to one man; only evil people will exist in this world and it will become devoid of people who take God's name.⁷⁵

Of the signs of the second category, the most important is the onslaught of Gog and Magog. The Qur'ān says:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فُتَحَتْ بَأْجُوْجُ وَمَأْجُوْجُ وَهُم مِّنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَنْسُلُونَ وَأَقْتَبَ الْوَعْدُ الْحَقُّ فَإِذَا هِيَ شَاهِيْصَةً أَبْصَارُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا قَدْ كُنَّا فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هَذَا بَلْ كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ (٢١: ٩٧-٩٦)

Until the time arrives that Gog and Magog are let loose and they launch an onslaught from every hill and the certain promise of the Day of Judgement nears its fulfilment, then behold that the disbelievers shall stare in amazement; At that time, they will say: "Woe be to us! We remained indifferent to it; in fact, we have wronged our souls." (21:96-97)

Gog and Magog are from the descendants of Noah's son Japeth who inhabited the northern areas of Asia. Later, some of their tribes reached Europe and after that settled in America and Australia. In the book of Ezekiel, they are called the leaders of Russia, Moscow and Tobalsac (Rush, Meshech and Tubal are present day Russia, Moscow and Tubalsac):

The word of the LORD came to me: Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Rush, Meshech and Tubal; prophesy against him. (Ezekiel, 38:1-2)

Son of man, prophesy against Gog and say: This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Rush, Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around and drag you along. I will bring you from the far north. (Ezekiel, 39:1-2)

It is evident from the revelation of John the Divine that the onslaught of Gog and Magog will begin sometime after a thousand years have passed on the advent of Muḥammad (sws) as a Prophet. At that time, they would be surrounding the earth from all sides. When the disorder they would spread reaches its culmination, fire will descend from the heavens and the tremors of the Day of Judgement will begin:

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth – Gog and Magog – to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves.⁷⁶ But fire came down from heaven

75. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 91, (nos. 80-81); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 75, 1162, 1260, (nos. 375, 6785, 7304).

76. “the camp of God's people” is a reference to Madīnah, and “the city he loves” is a

and devoured them. (Revelation, 20:7-9)

This same period of time is ascertained by the signs of proximity of the Day of Judgement which the Prophet (sws) mentioned in a question posed to him by Gabriel when he came to him in human form to instruct people. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

أَنْ يَلِدَ الْأُمَّةُ رِبَّهَا وَأَنْ تَرَى الْحُفَّةَ الْعَرَّاءَ الْعَالَةَ رِعَاءَ الشَّاءِ يَتَطَاوِلُونَ فِي الْبُنْيَانِ

One sign is that a slave-lady will give birth to her mistress and the second is that you will see these indigent [Arab] shepherds walking about bare-footed, bare-headed trying to compete one another in making tall buildings.⁷⁷

The second of these signs is very obvious. Every person can see how it has manifested itself in Arabia ever since the last century. However, people have generally found it difficult to determine what is implied by the first of these signs. It is very evident to me: its implication is that slavery as an institution shall stand abolished. Both these events have taken place simultaneously. Viewed thus, these two predictions absolutely determine the period of proximity of the Day of Judgement.

The signs which will manifest after these two have been mentioned by the Prophet (sws) at one instance and these include the onslaught of Gog and Magog. He is reported to have said:⁷⁸

إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا تَكُونُ حَتَّىٰ تَكُونَ عَشْرُ آيَاتٍ خَسْفٌ بِالْمَسْرِقِ وَخَسْفٌ بِالْمَغْرِبِ وَخَسْفٌ فِي جَزِيرَةِ الْعَرَبِ وَالدُّخَانُ وَالدَّجَّالُ وَذَاهَةُ الْأَرْضِ وَيَاجُوحٌ وَمَأْجُوحٌ وَطَلْوُعُ الشَّمْسِ مِنْ مَعْرِبِهَا وَنَارٌ تَخْرُجُ مِنْ قُورَةِ عَدَنٍ تَرْحَلُ النَّاسُ وَرِيحٌ تَلْقَى النَّاسَ فِي الْبَحْرِ

The meaning of this narrative is that these are the ten signs of the Day of Judgement and unless they appear, the Day will not come. These signs are:

1. The sinking of the earth in the East.
2. The sinking of the earth in the West.
3. The sinking of the earth in the Arabian peninsula.
4. Smoke; this could refer to a great atomic explosion also.
5. *Dajjāl*; This is an adjective meaning “a great deceiver”. It has also been referred to as *al-masīḥ al-dajjāl*. The implication is that before the Day of Judgement, a person will falsely claim to be Jesus (sws) and while making use of the notion of the return of Jesus (sws) found in Muslims, Jews and Christians will deceive people through some of his magical powers. It is mentioned in some

reference to Makkah. So evident are these allusions that anyone acquainted with the style of divine scriptures and with the history of these two cities cannot fail to decipher them.

77. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīh*, 24-25, (no. 93).

78. Ibid., 1256-1257, (no. 7286).

narratives that he would be blind in one eye and his deception would be so evident to the believers that it would be as if they would see disbelief written on his forehead.⁷⁹

6. A land animal which will probably be born directly from the earth, the way all creatures were created directly in the beginning.

7. The onslaught of Gog and Magog; this has already begun and is gradually going towards its culmination.

8. The rising of the sun in the West.

9. A fire that will rise from a pit of the Yemenite city of Eden and drive the people from behind.

10. A wind that will blow people away into the sea.

Besides these, the advent of Mahdī and that of Jesus (sws) from the heavens are also regarded as signs for the Day of Judgement. I have not mentioned them. The reason is that the narratives of the advent of Mahdī do not conform to the standards of Ḥadīth criticism set forth by the *muhaddithūn*. Some of them are weak and some fabricated; no doubt, some narratives, which are acceptable with regard to their chain of narration, inform us of the coming of a generous caliph;⁸⁰ however, if they are deeply deliberated upon, it becomes evident that the caliph they refer to is ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (d. 101 AH) who was the last caliph of the early history of the Muslims. This prediction of the Prophet (sws) has thus materialized in his personality word for word. One does not need to wait for any other Mahdī now. As far as the narratives which record the advent of Jesus (sws) are concerned, though the *muhaddithūn* have generally accepted them; however, if they are analyzed in the light of the Qur’ān, they too become dubious.

Firstly, the personality of Jesus (sws) has been discussed in the Qur’ān from various aspects. The Qur’ān has commented on his *da’wah* mission and his personality at a lot of places. The cataclysm that will take place on the Day of Judgement is also a very frequently discussed topic of the Qur’ān. The advent of a celebrated prophet of God from the heavens is no small an incident. In spite of the fact that there were many instances in which this incident could have been mentioned, we find that there is not a single place in which it is mentioned in the Qur’ān. Can human knowledge and intellect be satisfied with this silence? One does find this hard to digest.

Secondly, the Qur’ān has recorded a dialogue of God with Jesus (sws) which will take place on the Day of Judgement. During the course of this conversation, the Almighty will ask him about the real sphere in which the Christians had gone astray: the divinity of Jesus (sws) and Mary. He will ask Jesus (sws) if it was as per His instructions that he had told people to deify himself and his mother whilst leaving aside God. In response to this question, among other things, Jesus (sws) will say that he instructed his people in the very manner he was asked by God and that as long as he remained among them he watched over what they were doing,

79. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 302-302, 579, 1228, (nos. 1882, 3439, 7131); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 87-88, 1269, 1272-1273, (nos. 425, 7363, 7375).

80. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 1261-1262, (no. 7318).

and that after his own demise he was not aware of what good or evil they did, and that after his death it was God who watched over them. In this dialogue, one can clearly feel that the last sentence is very inappropriate if Jesus (sws) had also come in this world a second time. In such a case, he should have responded by saying that he knew what happened with them and that a little earlier he had gone to warn them of their grievous faults. The Qur'ān says:

مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ إِلَّا مَا أَمْرَتِنِي بِهِ أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا مَا دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ فَلَمَّا
ئَوْفَيْتِنِي كُنْتَ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (١١٧:٥)

Never did I say to them except what You commanded me to do: "Worship Allah my Lord and your Lord," and I was a witness over them while I dwelt with them. When You gave death to me, You were the Watcher over them and You are a witness over all things. (5:117)

Thirdly, in one verse of the Qur'ān, the Almighty has disclosed what will happen to Jesus (sws) and his followers till the Day of Judgement. sense and reason demand that here He should also have disclosed his second coming before the advent of this Day; however, we find no such mention. If Jesus (sws) had to come, why was silence maintained at this instance? One is unable to comprehend any reason for it. The verse is:

إِنَّمَا مُتَوَّلِّكُ وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ وَمُظْهِرُكَ مِنَ الظِّنَّ كَفَرُوا وَجَاعِلُ الظِّنَّ أَتَّبِعُوكَ فَوْقَ الظِّنَّ كَفَرُوا إِلَيَّ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ (٥٥:٣)

"O Jesus! I have decided to give death to you and raise you to Myself and cleanse you from these people who have denied [you]. I shall make those who follow you superior to those who reject faith till the Day of Judgement. Then to Me you shall all return. So at that time I shall give My verdict in what you have been differing in." (3:55)

iii. The Events

How will the Day of Judgement come about? The details of what will ensue at the advent of this day are mentioned in the Qur'ān at a number of places. What will happen to the heavens and the earth and what will befall the sun and the moon, the planets and stars and what situation will be faced by the creatures of the earth and how people will emerge from their graves to gather around their Lord is all portrayed in the Qur'ān. A study of pre-Islamic Arabic literature shows that Arabs relished parables more than similes. The Qur'ān while taking this into account has portrayed the picture of the cataclysm that will take place on that day in such a graphic manner that the reader feels and sees all these events happening before him. The sequence of events which will take place as per the Qur'ān is the following:

1. People would be deeply involved in their life-routine. Some would be on the way, some in the market, some in a gathering and some at their homes and no

one would have the slightest inkling that this whole world is about to be disrupted when suddenly the trumpet would be blown and the upheaval of the Day of Judgement would take place:

وَيَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَنَزَعَ مَنِ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنِ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ (٨٧:٢٧)

And remember the day when the trumpet is sounded and all who are between the heavens and the earth will be horror-struck except for those whom God will choose to spare. (27:87)

The word *al-sūr* has been translated as “the trumpet”. What actually would be the nature of this trumpet of course cannot be determined, and as such it belongs to the *mutashābihāt* category. However, one can have some idea of what it implies because the word trumpet does give us an idea of what it would be. In order to delineate the system and affairs of His world, the Almighty uses words found in the vocabulary of human beings which are akin to their own system and affairs. The purpose is to take us closer in our imagination to what is being discussed and the purpose is not to make us understand the exact nature and form of what is being discussed the way it is found in this world. In ancient times, the trumpet was sounded during royal processions or to herald an attack. It is evident from the Qur’ān that a similar thing would be sounded to announce the advent of the Day of Judgement. As the Qur’ān (81:4-5) portrays, this sound would strike panic and fear among the creatures of this earth causing people to even forget their dearest possessions and animals of the forest would gather together in utter confusion. Finally, all creatures of the earth would pass out because of this horrific sound:

وَنُفَخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَصَاعَقَ مَنِ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنِ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ (٦٨:٣٩)

And the trumpet shall be sounded and all those between the heavens and the earth shall fall down fainting except those whom God shall spare. (39:68)

At various places, the Qur’ān has graphically depicted what will happen to the creatures of this earth when this commotion ensues. When after the first earthquake tremor the second tremor comes, the state of the earth would be much like a ship which is being swept by the tumultuous waves around it and whose inhabitants as a result would be trembling with fear with eyes horror-struck and they would be so overcome and stricken by the situation as if the horrific punishment of God has driven them mad. The Qur’ān says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ يَوْمَ تَرَوْنَهَا تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ وَتَضَعُّ كُلُّ ذَاتٍ حَمْلَهَا وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَارَى وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَارَى وَلَكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ (٢٢:١)

O People! Have fear of your Lord. The cataclysm of the Day of Judgement is very dreadful indeed. The day you see it, on that day every suckling mother

shall forget her infant and every pregnant female shall cast her burden, and you shall see mankind in a state of inebriation though they would be not inebriated but it would be because God's punishment would be so grave. (22:1-2)

2. It would be at this time when great disruption in the physical world will begin. Such great commotion would ensue all over this universe that mountains would be crushed to grains, seas would burst forth and all galaxies and heavenly bodies would be displaced and would fuse into one another. So great would this all-embracing upheaval be that minds cannot imagine it and words cannot describe it. This turmoil would continue for a period known only to God:

إِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِرَتْ وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انكَدَرَتْ وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُيَرَتْ وَإِذَا الْعِشَارُ عُطَلَتْ وَإِذَا الْوُحُوشُ حُشِرَتْ وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ سُجَرَتْ ... عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَا أَحْضَرَتْ (٨١:٦-١٤)

At the time when the sun ceases to shine, and when the stars are bedimmed, and when the mountains are set moving, and when camels, ten-months pregnant are left untended, and when wild beasts [forgetting all their enmities] are herded together, and when the seas burst forth ... Then [O people! Each one of you] will know what he has brought forward. (81:1-6,14)

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انشَقَّتْ وَأَذَنَتْ لِرِبَّهَا وَحُقَّتْ وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ وَأَذَنَتْ لِرِبَّهَا وَحُقَّتْ (٨٤:١-٥)

That day when the sky is rent asunder, and obeys its Lord's command as is befitting for it. And when the earth is stretched out and casts out all that is within her and becomes empty and obeys its Lord as it should do. [That will be the day when you shall meet your Lord]. (84:1-5)

3. After this, the second phase will begin. In the Qur'ān this phase has been called the phase in which mankind will be re-created. Thus from this very turmoil, a new physical world will emerge:

يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ كَطَّى السِّجْلَ لِلْكُتبِ كَمَا بَدَأْنَا أَوَّلَ حَلْقٍ تَعِيْدُهُ وَعَدْنَا عَلَيْنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ (٢١:٤٠)

Remember the day when We shall roll up the heavens like a scroll wrapped in parchment. Just as We brought about the first creation, so will We do it again. This is a promise liable on us and We shall assuredly fulfil it. (21:104)

In what manner would this next phase come about? The Almighty has told us that all heavenly bodies including this earth, sun, moon and galaxies made of billions of stars and planets would change into an earth and heavens having new physical laws: (يَوْمَ يُبَدِّلُ الْأَرْضَ غَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ (٤٨:١)). According to the Qur'ān, at this juncture, the trumpet would be sounded once

again after which mankind would rise from their graves and would advance to the court of justice set up by their Lord for them:

ثُمَّ نُفَخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَىٰ فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَنْظُرُونَ (٦٨:٣٩)

Then the trumpet will be blown again and they shall suddenly rise and look around them. (39:68)

وَنُفَخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَإِذَا هُمْ مِنَ الْأَحْدَاثِ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَنْسِلُونَ (٥١:٣٦)

And the trumpet will be blown and all of a sudden they will rise up from their graves and hasten to their Lord. (36:51)

iv. Phases and Abodes

The phases through which a person passes and the abodes in which he is lodged during his journey to meet his Lord are also mentioned in the Qur’ān. Slowly but surely, he is moving to encounter his Lord. The first phase of this journey is death. After a short stay in this world, every single person passes through this phase. There is no escape from it. The Almighty has said: كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ (٢:١٨٥) (every person shall taste death, (3:185)). It can come in the morning and it can come in the evening; one may taste it even before one’s birth or right after birth. It can come in childhood, in youth or in old age at any time and every person has to submit to it whether he likes it or not. According to the Qur’ān, at death, the real personality of a person which is called the soul by the Qur’ān and which is independent of his body is separated from his mortal being. The Almighty has told us that initially also it was given to man at the culmination of his mortal being which took place after passing through various phases and today also it is given to it once about 120 days elapse on the embryo.⁸¹ Death is the name of separating this personality of a person from his body. A specific angel – who has a whole staff of angels – is deputed for this task.⁸² He formally comes and claims a person’s soul just as a government official entrusted for collecting something discharges his responsibility:

قُلْ يَتَوَفَّكُمْ مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِلَّ بِكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ (٣٢:١١)

Tell them: “The angel of death deputed over you shall claim your souls. Then to your Lord shall you be returned.” (32:11)

At this instance, what happens to a person is also depicted in the Qur’ān. The souls of people who have deliberately rejected their prophets even after being convinced of their veracity are claimed by the angels whilst they hit and strike these disbelievers and at this very juncture of death they inform them that a

81. The Qur’ān, 32:6-9; 23:12-14; Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1284-1285, (no. 7454); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1151, (no. 6723).

82. The Qur’ān, 4:97; 6:93; 16:28.

terrible torment awaits them because of their evil deeds:

وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذْ يَتَوَفَّى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ وَأَدْبَارَهُمْ وَدُوْقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ
ذَلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمْتُ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ بِظَلَامٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ (٨: ٥٠ - ٥١)

And if you could see the angels when they take away the souls of these disbelievers whilst striking them on their faces and their backs and [say:] “Taste now the torment of the fire! This is the punishment for the deeds you committed with your own hands and [you should know that] God does not do the slightest of injustice to His servants.” (8:50-51)

On the other hand, people who profess faith in their prophets and are absolutely without any stain of disbelief or polytheism and have also not infringed upon the rights of others or been oppressive in any manner are presented with salutations from the angels and given glad tidings of Paradise:

الَّذِينَ تَقَوَّلُهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ طَيِّبُونَ يَقُولُونَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٣٢: ١٦)

To those whose souls the angels claim such that they are virtuous, they say: “Peace be on you. Enter [this] Paradise as a reward of your deeds.” (16:32)

After this, are the abodes which are called Barzakh, Mahshar, Hell and Paradise. The various details about these places which are mentioned in the Qur’ān are outlined below.

(1) Barzakh

This word is an arabicized form of the Persian word *pardah* and is used for the boundary beyond which the dead shall be kept till the Day of Judgement. It is, so to speak, an obstruction that prevents them from coming back. وَمَنْ وَرَأَنَهُمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَى يَوْمٍ يُعْنَوْنَ (٢٣: ١٠٠) (beyond them is a barrier till the Day they are raised [back to life], (23:100)). The “World of Barzakh” is a term which has originated from this word. In some Ḥadīth narratives, the word “grave” has been figuratively used for this world. Here mankind would be alive but this life would be without any corporal form. Here, the awareness of the soul, the nature of emotions, observations and experiences would be similar to the one found during dreams. Thus it has been mentioned in the Qur’ān that when the trumpet is sounded, this dream will end and the wrongdoers, while suddenly finding themselves alive with bodies and souls in the large field of Mahshar, will cry out: يَا وَيْلَنَا مَنْ بَعْنَا مِنْ مَرْقَدَنَا هَذَا (٣٦: ٥٢) (who has roused us from our resting-place?) (36:52)). It is evident from the Qur’ān that people whose fate would be absolutely clear whether they are the righteous who have remained faithful to God and to human beings in an exemplary way or are the haughty who have rejected the truth in sheer arrogance, for them one form of punishment and reward will begin in this world of Barzakh. The reason for this is that taking an account from them would not be required.

Examples of the first category are the Companions (rta) of the Prophet (sws)

who fought with him against the forces of evil and were martyred as a result. The Qur’ān says that they are alive even though people are not aware of the nature of this life and are benefiting from the blessings of their Lord:

وَلَا تَحْسِبُنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ
مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوْ بِهِمْ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَخْرُجُونَ
يَسْتَشِرُونَ بِنِعْمَةِ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيقُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٣: ١٦٩-١٧١)

And [in this battle] do not in any way regard those who have been slain in the cause of God to be dead. [They are not dead]. They are alive in the presence of their Lord and are being provided for, delighted with what God has blessed them from His favours whilst receiving glad tidings about those they left behind, who have not yet joined them that [in this Kingdom of God] there is neither any fear for them nor sorrow rejoicing in God’s grace and bounty and from the fact that God will not deny the faithful their reward. (3:169-171)

An example of the second category is the Pharaoh and his people who did not profess faith even after the truth had been communicated to them by Moses (sws) to the extent that they were left with no excuse to deny it. Thus as a recompense of their sin, they were punished in this world and in the world of Barzakh also they are made to see Hell every morning and evening:

وَحَاقَ بِالْفَرْعَوْنَ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ التَّارِيْخِيْرُضُونَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَعَشِيًّا وَيَوْمَ نَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ أَدْخِلُوا آلَ
فَرْعَوْنَ أَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ (٤٠: ٤٥-٤٦)

And a dreadful torment encompassed the Pharaoh’s people. The Fire of Hell before which they are brought morning and evening and the day when that Hour comes it will be ordered: “Put the Pharaoh’s people through a sterner torment!” (40:45-46)

It is this torment of the graves which is mentioned in certain narratives.⁸³ The Prophet (sws) has further informed us that the first question that would be asked from the people to whom he was sent was regarding his own status.⁸⁴ The reason for this is obvious. Once a *rasūl* (messenger) is sent to his people, it is he who becomes the only distinguisher of good and evil for them. Hence after professing faith in him, there is no need to ask anything else from any other person.

(2) **Mahshar**

The next place people would encounter is the Mahshar. The Qur’ān says that after the trumpet is sounded the second time, all mankind born from Adam (sws)

83. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 221, (no. 1379); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1242, (no. 7211).

84. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 220, (no. 1374); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1243, (no. 7216).

till the Day of Judgement would be raised to life again. This raising to life in the language of the Qur'ān is called *hashr*. We have already alluded to the fact that after the great upheaval on this Day, a new earth would come into existence. This raising to life would take place on that new earth. The details of the events and incidents which would take place once people are created again are as follows:

1. All mankind would be given life and would rise from their graves. Each person would be given a body and a soul. This very re-creation is called “the second life” by the Qur'ān (40:11). The previous body of each person would be replaced with a new one which would be appropriate to endure God's blessings as well as His wrath; however, each person would have the same personality at that time as he had in this world:

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ إِذَا هُمْ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَنْسِلُونَ (٥١:٣٦)

And the trumpet will be blown and suddenly they will rise up from their graves and hasten to their Lord. (36:51)

وَقَالُوا أَئِذَا كُنَّا عَظَاماً وَرُفَاتًا إِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ حَلْقًا جَدِيدًا قُلْ كُوُنُوا حَجَارَةً أَوْ حَدِيدًا أَوْ حَلْقًا مَّمَّا يَكُبُرُ فِي صُدُورِكُمْ فَسَيَقُولُونَ مَنْ يُعِيدُنَا قُلْ الَّذِي فَطَرَكُمْ أَوْلَ مَرَّةً فَسَيُنَعِضُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ رُؤُوسَهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هُوَ قُلْ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونَ قَرِيبًا (٥١-٤٩ : ١٧)

And they say: “When we are turned to bones and bits of dust, shall we be raised to life again?” Tell them: “Whether you turn into stone or iron, or any other substance which in your opinion is even harder than these [even then you shall still be gathered to Us].” They will then ask: “Who will re-create us?” Tell them: “The One Who created you the first time.” At this, they will shake their heads before you and will ask: “When will this be?” Tell them: “It may well be near at hand.” (17:49-51)

2. In this second life, the abilities and powers of a person would greatly increase. Whilst being stationed at his own place, he would even be able to see anyone he wants to however far that person may be and would also be able to converse with him. It is mentioned in the Qur'ān that when a person dwelling in Paradise would remember a friend of his in the previous life, he, from where he is, would easily be able to see that friend residing in the depths of Hell:

فَالَّهُمَّ هَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُطَلِّعُونَ فَاطَّلِعْ فَرَاهُ فِي سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ قَالَ تَالِلَهُ إِنْ كِدْتَ لَكَرْدِينَ وَلَوْلَا نِعْمَةُ رَبِّي
لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ (٣٧-٥٤ : ٣٧)

He will say: “Just take a peep inside.” After saying this, as soon as he will bend down, he will see his friend in the very midst of Hell. [Then] will say: “By the Lord! You almost wrecked me! Had not the grace of God been with me, I would have surely been among those who have been brought in seized.” (37:54-57)

3. This would be a new world whose earth will be lit up with the light of God. His majesty would surround Him and angels would encircle Him. Everything would declare His praise; even criminals would reach His presence whilst declaring His praises and exaltedness:

ثُمَّ نُفَخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَى فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَنْظُرُونَ وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا (٣٩:٦٨-٦٩)

Then the trumpet will be sounded again and they will suddenly rise whilst staring around them and the earth on that Day will be lit up with the light of her Lord. (39:68-69)

يَوْمَ يَدْعُوكُمْ فَتَسْتَحِيُّوْنَ بِحَمْدِهِ وَتَطْئُنُوْنَ إِنْ لَبِتُّمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًاً (١٧:٥٢)

On that day, He will summon you all, and you shall obey Him whilst declaring His praises and exaltedness and you will think that you had stayed just for a small period. (17:52)

وَتَرَى الْمَلَائِكَةَ حَافِينَ مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُوْنَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَقَيْلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِيْنَ (٣٩:٧٥)

And you will see the angels encircling the Throne, giving glory to their Lord and declaring His praises and judgement will be passed with fairness between people and it will be declared: “Gratitude is for God, Lord of the Universe!” (39:75)

4. On that Day, the earth and the heavens will be in God’s grasp. For those who deny it in this world, this Day will be such that its severity will turn the young into old:

وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ (٣٩:٦٧)

And on the Day of Judgement, He will hold the entire earth in His grasp and the heavens will be folded up in His hand. Glory be to Him! Exalted is He above those whom they associate with Him! (39:67)

فَكَيْفَ تَتَّقُوْنَ إِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ يَوْمًا يَجْعَلُ الْوِلْدَانَ شَيْئًا السَّمَاءَ مُنْفَطِرًا بِهِ كَانَ وَعْدُهُ مَفْعُولًا (١٧:٧٣)

So if you deny, how then will you save yourself from the Day which shall make the children grey-haired. The heavens are ripping apart with its burden and the promise of God [undoubtedly] is certain to be fulfilled. (73:17-18)

The deeds done by people will be evident from their very faces. Everyone will be only thinking of his own self and will have no concern for others. A brother will not respond to the wailings of his own brother and sons will be heedless to the cries of their parents; men will forget their wives and children:

فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الصَّاحَّةُ يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ لِكُلِّ امْرَئٍ مِنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَانٌ
يُعْنِيهِ وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُسْفَرَةٌ ضَاحِكَةٌ مُسْتَبْشِرَةٌ وَوُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيْهَا غَبَرَةٌ تَرْهُقُهَا قَتْرَةٌ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ
الْكُفَّارُ الْفَجَرُ (٤٢-٣٣ : ٨٠)

So when the deafening blast comes [ask them: where will they go]. On that Day, man will flee from his brother and from his mother and his father, his wife and his children. Everyone will be concerned with his own self. Many a face on that day will be bright, smiling and rejoicing, and many a face on that day will be gloomy, veiled in darkness. They will be of these very disbelievers, these wrongdoers. (80:33-42)

The wrongdoers on that day will be dragged by their forelocks. They will follow the very leaders there who they used to follow in the previous world. These wrongdoers will be recognized from their faces and will be brought from their graves in such a manner that one angel will be pushing from behind and another will be marching along him to bear evidence against him. They will be asked to prostrate in order to humiliate them but they will not be able to do so:

يُعْرَفُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ بِسِيمَاهُمْ كَيْفُؤُخْدُ بِالنَّوَاصِي وَالْأَقْدَامِ فَيَأْتِيَ الَّاءَ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٤١-٤٢ : ٥٥)

The wrongdoers will be recognized through their looks; then they shall be seized by their forelocks and their feet [and thrown into Hell]. At that time, which of your Lord's majesties would you deny? (55:41-42)

فَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَا أَمْرُ فِرْعَوْنَ بِرَشِيدٍ يَقْدُمُ قَوْمُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَأَوْرَدَهُمُ النَّارَ وَيَسِّنَ الْوَرْدُ
الْمَوْرُودُ (٩٧-٩٨ : ١١)

But they followed what the Pharaoh said to them even though what he said to them was not right. On the Day of Judgement, He shall stand in front of his people and shall lead them into the Fire. What an evil place to reach where they have reached. (11:97-98)

وَنُفَخَ فِي الصُّورِ ذَلِكَ يَوْمُ الْوَعِيدِ وَجَاءَتِ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَعَهَا سَائِقٌ وَشَهِيدٌ (٥٠ : ٢٠-٢١)
And the trumpet shall be sounded. That day is the one in which Our threats will manifest and every soul shall come such that there will be one who drives it on and another to bear evidence. (50:20-21)

يَوْمَ يُكَشَّفُ عَنْ سَاقٍ وَيُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ حَاشِعَةً أَبْصَارُهُمْ تَرْهُقُهُمْ ذِلَّةً وَقَدْ
كَانُوا يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ وَهُمْ سَالِمُونَ (٤٢-٦٨ : ٤٣)

They must remember the day when a great tumult will take place and they will be called to prostrate and they will not be able to do so. Downcast shall be their looks; ignominy shall cover them. [These wrongdoers! their backs

have now become stiff whilst] they also used to be called to bow in adoration when they were capable of it. (68: 42-43)

5. Mankind on that day will be divided into three groups. The foremost in faith, the righteous and the wrongdoers. The second of these two groups will be given their record in their right hand, whilst the hands of the third of these groups will be tied and they will be given their record from behind in their left hand:

وَكُنْتُمْ أَرْوَاحًا ثَلَاثَةٌ فَأَصْحَابُ الْمِيَمَةِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمِيَمَةِ وَأَصْحَابُ الْمَسَامَةِ
وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ أُولَئِكَ الْمُتَرَبُونَ (٥٦ : ١١-٧)

And on that Day, you will be divided into three groups: the companions of the right hand so what to speak of the [good fortune] of the companions of the right hand and the companions of the left hand so what to speak of the [misfortune] of the companions of the left hand and the foremost are after all the foremost. They indeed are the near ones. (56:7-11)

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ وَرَاءَ ظَهْرِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَدْعُوْ نُورًا وَبَصْلًا سَعِيرًا (٨٤ : ١٠-١٢)

And he whose record is handed out to him from behind his back [into his tied up hands] will call for death and shall enter the blazing fire of Hell. (84:10-12)

6. The reality behind the differences between people shall be disclosed. When they will be brought forth for accountability, each and every deed of theirs will be justly presented before them and with the weight it carries. At that time, neither will friendships avail people nor any sale/purchase, ransom or intercession will be of any use to anyone. No one will be wronged. Every thing will stand clear in the utmost manner:

إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبَّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ (٤٨ : ٥)

To God shall you all return and then He shall inform you about that in which you were differing. (5:48)

وَنَصَّعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَلَا تُظْلِمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَإِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا
وَكَفَى بِنَا حَاسِبِينَ (٤٧ : ٢١)

And on the Day of Judgement, We shall set up the scales of justice so that no man shall in the least be wronged. And if a person has done a deed as small as a grain of a mustard seed We shall bring it forward and sufficient are We for taking account. (21:47)

وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ
يُنْصَرُونَ (٤٨ : ٢)

And guard yourselves against the day when no soul shall be of use to another in anyway and no intercession shall be accepted and no compensation be taken from it nor will people be helped. (2:48)

7. Witnesses shall be presented so that the wrong-doers are left with no excuse to deny their sins. Prophets of God shall also be presented as witnesses. Even the tongues, hands, feet, ears, eyes and skins of people will bear witness. After this, judgement shall be passed:

وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ وَجِيءَ بِالشَّيْءَنَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَقُضِيَ بِنَفْعِهِمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٣٩ : ٦٩)

And the earth shall be lit up with the light of her Lord, and the register of accounts shall be laid open and all the prophets shall be called and those also who were given the responsibility of bearing witness, and people shall be judged with fairness such that none shall be wronged. (39:69)

يَوْمَ تَشَهَّدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَسْتِئْنُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (٢٤ : ٢٤)

On the day when their own tongues, hands, and feet will bear witness to their deeds. (24:24)

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا مَا جَاءُوهَا شَهَدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَأَصْبَارُهُمْ وَحَلُولُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا بَعْمَلُونَ وَقَالُوا لِلْحُلُولِهِمْ لَمْ شَهِدُوكُمْ عَلَيْنَا قَالُوا أَنْطَقَنَا اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْطَقَ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ خَلَقُكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٤١ - ٢٠ : ٤١)

Until when they come near it, their ears, their eyes, and their very skins will bear witness to what they had been doing in the previous world. “Why did you bear witness against us?” they will ask their skins, and their skins will reply: “God, who gives speech to all things, has given us speech.” And it was He who created you the first time and now to Him are you being returned. (41:20-21)

8. It is on this occasion that the deities whom the polytheists worshipped shall regard them as liars, leaders shall disown their followers and the eternal enemy of man – Satan – shall also renounce his followers and regard them as sinners:

وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا شُرَكَاءَهُمْ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاءِ شُرَكَاؤُنَا الَّذِينَ كُنَّا نَدْعُو مِنْ دُونِنَا فَأَلْقَوْا إِلَيْهِمُ الْقُولَ إِنْكُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (٨٦ : ١٦)

And when they who indulged in polytheism [in this world] will see their deities, they will say: “Lord, these are the deities whom we called up whilst leaving you.” At this, they [– the deities –] will retort: “You surely are liars!” (16:86)

إِذْ تَبَرَّا الَّذِينَ أَتَبْعَوْا مِنَ الَّذِينَ أَتَبْعَوْا الْعَذَابَ وَنَقَطَعَتْ بِهِمُ الْأَسْبَابُ (٢: ١٦٦)

At that time when those who were followed will disown their followers and will face punishment and the ties which now unite them will suddenly break asunder. (2:166)

وَقَالَ الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعْدَ الْحَقِّ وَوَعَدْنَاكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْنَاكُمْ وَمَا كَانَ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ مِّن سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا أَن دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِي فَلَا تَلُومُونِي وَلَوْمُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ مَا أَنَا بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُصْرِخِي إِنِّي كَفَرْتُ بِمَا أَشْرَكْتُمُونِ مِنْ قَبْلِ إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٢٢: ١٤)

And after the judgement has been passed, Satan will say to them: "Indeed, true was the promise which God made with you and I never fulfilled the promises I made with you. And I had no power over you. I only called you and you responded to my call. Do not now blame me, but blame yourselves. Here I cannot address your grievances nor can you address mine. I have already denied your making me a partner [with God]. Indeed, it is for such wrong-doers that there is a grievous penalty." (14:22)

(3) Hell

Hell is the abode of punishment for the sinners. It is also a place in which their sins are cleansed and purged. It has been mentioned in the Qur'ān with various names. At some places, it has been called Jahannum and at others Saqr. It has also been called al-Sa'ir, al-Nār and al-Nār al-kubrā. It is the worst of abodes according to the Qur'ān (2:126, 206; 3:151; 14:29). The Almighty has informed us that it will have seven doors and for each door there will be a certain share of sinners (15:44). If the sins which the Qur'ān has called deadly are enumerated, they can be categorized as seven (17:22-39). Satan tries to induce people into one or all of these sins in order to lead them to Hell. In all probability, each of these seven doors of Hell are for these seven deadly sins. The extent and size of Hell is also intended to be made evident from this description. It will be so huge that it will have seven doors through which sinners will be made to enter in accordance with the sins they had committed. It has also been stated in the Qur'ān that nineteen angels are in charge of it:

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا سَفَرُ لَا تُبْقِي وَلَا تَنْدِرُ لَوْاحَةً لِلْبَشَرِ عَلَيْهَا تِسْعَةَ عَشَرَ (٧٤: ٢٧ - ٣٠)

And what do you know what this Hell is? It will not show mercy nor spare anyone. It scorches the skin. [Deputed] over it are nineteen. (74:27-30)

At various places, in the Qur'ān, it has been mentioned that people who deliberately associate partners with God and profess disbelief in Him shall be punished eternally. Similar will be the punishment of a Muslim who kills another Muslim deliberately. People who disobey the laws of inheritance are also promised this doom. This fate will also await those who have committed some similar crimes. No doubt, there will be people who will be taken out of Hell once

they complete their term of punishment; however, it is evident from the Qur'ān that in order to punish the previously mentioned criminals, Hell will always be kept intact. In spite of this, it can be expected that one day, Hell too shall cease to exist. The reason for this is that its torment is a threat from the Almighty and not a promise and the Almighty certainly has the right to reduce the punishment of these sinners or turn them into dust and ashes and eternally bury them in Hell:

فَمَنِ الْذِينَ شَقُوا فِي التَّارِيخِ وَشَهِيقُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ
رَبُّكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَالٌ لَمَا يُرِيدُ (١٠٦-١٠٧: ١١)

Then the damned shall be cast into the Fire; here they will groan and scream like donkeys and shall abide in it as long as the heavens and the earth [of that world] exist unless your Lord ordains otherwise. Indeed, your Lord is able to accomplish what He wants to. (11:106-107)

The Qur'ān also mentions the spiritual and corporal punishments which will be meted out to the sinners in Hell: There will be the punishment of the fire (22:9). This fire will scorch skins (74:29), disfigure faces (23:104), pluck out skins (70:16), reach the hearts (104:6-7) and its flame will be larger than castles (77:32); neither will people die nor receive any comfort in it (35:36; 87:12-13); such boiling water will be given to them for drinking that it will cut their intestines to pieces (47:15); this boiling water will also be poured on their heads (22:19); they will be made to drink the fluid in which wounds are washed (69:36-37; 78:24-25); thorny bushes and the tree of *al-zaqqūm* will be the food they will be given and this tree will boil in their stomachs like the boiling of scalding water (88:6; 44:43-46); it will neither nourish them nor satisfy their hunger (88:7); they will wear garments of fire (22:19), their necks will have yokes and their feet will be in chains (40:71; 76:4); everything will become a yearning for them (19:39). The greatest punishment will be that sinners will not be able to see the Almighty nor receive any attention from Him (83:15). The Almighty will not even like to look at some of them (3:77):

إِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ كَانَتْ مِرْصَادًا لِلْطَّاغِينَ مَا بِأَيْدِيهَا أَحْقَابًا لَمَيُذُوقُونَ فِيهَا بَرْدًا وَلَا شَرَابًا إِلَّا حَمِيمًا
وَغَسَاقًا جَزَاءً وِفَاقًا إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا لَا يَرْجُونَ حُسَابًا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا كَذَّابًا وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ كَتَابًا
فَذُوقُوا فَلَنْ تَرِيدَ كُمْ إِلَّا عَذَابًا (٢١-٣٠: ٧٨)

Indeed, Hell lurks in ambush, a place for the transgressors. They will abide therein for ages. Nothing cool will they taste therein nor will they have anything to drink save hot water and pus. A recompense according to their deeds. These people are those who did not expect any account [of their deeds] and had recklessly denied Our revelations, [whereas] We have counted all their doings by writing them down. So taste [you O people!] We shall only increase torment for you. (78:21-30)

(4) Paradise

This is the abode of the righteous. Jesus (sws) has called it: “The Kingdom of Heaven.”⁸⁵ The Qur’ān has also called it Rawdah (garden), Firdaws (orchard), Jannah al-Na‘īm (orchard of blessings), Jannah al-Khuld (orchard of eternal life), Jannah ‘Adan (orchard of eternal abode) besides some other similar names. It is as expansive as the Universe, and is a place of eternal bliss where in contrast to this world, there is no concept of death with life, sorrow with happiness, worry with satisfaction, hardship with ease and torment with blessings. Its comfort is eternal, its bliss endless and its days and nights unending. Its peace is forever, its happiness will never cease and its majesty is everlasting and its perfection immaculate:

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ سُعِدُوا فَفِي الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شاءَ رَبُّكَ عَطَاءً
غَيْرَ مَحْدُودٍ (١٠٨:١١)

And as for the fortunate, they shall abide in Paradise and remain there as long as the heavens and the earth [of that world] endure, unless your Lord ordains otherwise. As a favour never ending. (11:108)

Believers will be led into it with such majesty that before them and behind them and on their right and on their left – everywhere there will be angels of God. These angels will escort them in their company to Paradise where its guards will welcome them with salutations and greetings:

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمِّرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوهَا وَفُتَحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَرَّنَهَا
سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طَبِيعَمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ (٧٣:٣٩)

And those who feared their Lord shall be led in throngs to Paradise. Until when they draw near, its gates will be opened for them and its keepers will say to them: “Peace be to you; rejoice and enter into it to dwell forever.” (39:73)

The Qur’ān has portrayed the life of Paradise by depicting the life of royal and regal people so that man in this transient world is able to have some idea of the blessings of Paradise. Hence it is for this purpose that lush green orchards, flowing streams, luxuriant gardens, towering castles, very expensive utensils, slaves wearing golden waste-bands, thrones made of gold, clothes of satin and brocade, goblets of crystal, blissful gatherings and stunning virgins are mentioned:

إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ مَفَازًا حَدَائِقَ وَأَعْنَابًا وَكَوَافِعَ أَثْرَابًا وَكَاسًا دِهَاقًا لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَعْوًا وَلَا كَذَابًا
جَزَاءً مِنْ رَبِّكَ عَطَاءً حِسَابًا (٧٨:٣٦-٣١)

However, for the God-fearing, there is great success on that Day. Gardens [to dwell in] and grapes [to feast on] and blooming maidens of equal ages [to be

85. Matthew, 5:19-20; 7:21.

charmed with] and overflowing cups [to be drunk in their companionship]. They will not hear therein any idle talk or any false accusation. This will be the reward from your Lord – exactly according to their deeds. (78:31-36)

فَوَقَاهُمُ اللَّهُ شَرَّ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقَاهُمْ نَصْرَةً وَسُرُورًا وَجَرَاهُمْ بِمَا صَبَرُوا حَتَّىٰ وَحْرَيْرًا مُتَكَبِّنَ فِيهَا
عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ لَا يَرَوْنَ فِيهَا شَمْسًا وَلَا زَمْهَرِيرًا وَدَانِيَةً عَلَيْهِمْ ظَلَالُهَا وَذَلَّلَتْ قُطُوفُهَا ثَدْلِيلًا وَيُطَافُ
عَلَيْهِمْ بَانِيَةً مِنْ فَضَّةٍ وَأَكْوَابٍ كَانَتْ قَوَارِيرٍ قَوَارِيرٍ مِنْ فَضَّةٍ قَدَرُوهَا تَقْدِيرًا وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَاسًا
كَانَ مَرَاجِحًا زَنجِبِيلًا عَيْنًا فِيهَا شَسَمَى سَلْسَبِيلًا وَيُطَوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلِدَانٌ مُخْلَدُونَ إِذَا رَأَيْتُهُمْ
حَسِيْبَتْهُمْ لُؤْلُؤًا مَشْتُورًا وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ تَمَّ رَأَيْتَ نَعِيمًا وَمَلْكًا كَبِيرًا عَالَيْهِمْ ثَيَابٌ سُنْدُسٌ خُضْرٌ
وَإِسْتِبْرَقٌ وَحُلُولًا أَسَاوِرٌ مِنْ فَضَّةٍ وَسَقَاهُمْ رُبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا إِنَّ هَذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَاءً وَكَانَ
سَعِيْكُمْ مَشْكُورًا (٢٦: ١١-٢٢)

So Allah [their Lord] saved them from the affliction of that Day and bestowed them with freshness and joy, and as reward for being patient [in this world] gave them Paradise [to live in] and robes of silk [to wear]. They will be reclining in it on thrones and will feel neither the heat of the sun nor the cold of the winters. The shades of its trees will bow down over them and the clusters of their fruits will be within their easy reach. And dishes of silver [to eat from] and goblets of crystal [to drink from] will be passed around them. And the crystal will be of silver which they [—their attendants—] will have aptly arranged [for every service]. [Besides this], they will be given to drink a wine flavoured with Zanjabil. This is also a spring therein called Salsabil. And they will be attended by boys graced with eternal youth; they will be running around. When you see them, you will think that they are pearls scattered about. And wherever you look, you will see great bliss and a kingdom glorious [such] that even the outer garments of [the dwellers of paradise] will be of green silk and brocade and satin. And they were adorned with bracelets of silver [and then they reached the place where] their Lord entertained them with pure wine. Indeed, this is a reward of your deeds and [congratulations to you that] your endeavours have been acknowledged. (76:11-22)

Similarly, the Qur'ān has said that the dwellers of Paradise will get whatever they desire (41:31; 43:71; 50:35). Their hearts will be cleansed from envy and malice; like brothers they will sit on thrones facing each other (7:43; 15:47). They will never be turned out from Paradise nor will they ever get fed-up and want to come out of it and nor will they face any sort of difficulty there (15:48; 18:108; 35:34-35). The blessings and favours of Paradise will come before them every time with a new taste, pleasure and beauty. When the same fruit will be given to them again and again, each time it will have a new taste, a fresh outlook and provide them with a unique pleasure (2:25). Purity and cleanliness will

abound everywhere (56:25). Neither will there be any regret of the past nor any fear of the future (2:62, 112, 262, 274, 277). Most of all, the dwellers of Paradise will be blessed with the pleasure of God: He will be pleased with them and in return the whole atmosphere will resound day and night with cries of exaltation, gratitude and praise for the Lord from these dwellers (9:72, 10:10, 19:62, 22:24, 39:73).

The Prophet (sws) has further explained that the dwellers of Paradise shall eat and drink but will neither spit nor need to urinate or defecate; neither will there be any fluid coming out of the nose nor will there be any saliva and cough; even their sweat will smell of musk; they will live in such luxuries that they will encounter no hardship; neither will their clothes rot nor will these people lose their youth. A caller will call: there is such health here which has no illness, there is such life here which has no death, there is such youth here which has no old age. The faces of people will be shinning like the moon and the stars.⁸⁶

All this portrayal is to bring these sites closer to our comprehension. What exactly is their reality? The best answer to this question is the one given by the Prophet (sws) that in Paradise the Almighty will provide His servants with that which eyes have not seen, ears have not heard and never has any person ever been able to imagine what is in it.⁸⁷ On a similar note, the Qur'ān too has said:

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَا أَخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِنْ قُرْبَةٍ أَعْيُنٍ حَرَاءٍ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٧:٣٢)

Then no one knows what bliss has been kept hidden for him as a reward for his deeds. (32:17)

86. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 553, (no. 3327); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1231, 1233, (nos. 7149, 7157).

87. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 541, (no. 3244); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1228, (no. 7132).

Chapter 2

Morals and Morality

After faith, the second important requirement of religion is purification of morals. This means that a person should cleanse his attitude both towards his creator and towards his fellow human beings. This is what is termed as a righteous deed. All the *shari‘ah* is its corollary. With the change and evolution in societies and civilizations, the *shari‘ah* has indeed changed; however faith and righteous deeds, which are the foundations of religion, have not undergone any change. The Qur’ān is absolutely clear that any person who brings forth these two things before the Almighty on the Day of Judgement will be blessed with Paradise, which shall be his eternal abode:

وَمَنْ يَأْتِهِ مُؤْمِنًا قَدْ عَمِلَ الصَّالِحَاتِ فَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الدَّرَجَاتُ الْعُلَىٰ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْنِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَذَلِكَ حَرَاءُ مَنْ تَرَكَ (٢٠: ٧٥-٧٦)

And he who comes before Him as a believer having done righteous deeds, exalted ranks are for such people, evergreen gardens beneath which streams flow and they shall abide therein forever. This shall be the reward of those who purify themselves. (20:75-76)

It is doing these righteous deeds which is termed as sound moral behaviour and doing unrighteous ones is termed as immoral behaviour. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: إِنَّمَا بُعْثُتُ لِأَتَمِّنَ صَالِحَ الْأَخْلَاقِ (I have been sent to achieve the culmination of high moral standards).¹ He is also reported to have said: “The best among you are those who are morally sound from others.”² “These are the people who are very dear to me.”³ “On the Day of Judgement, it will be high moral behaviour which will carry most weight in the scales of a person.”⁴ “A believer achieves the same rank through high moral behaviour as can be achieved through

1. Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 3, 80, (8729).

2. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 597, (no. 3559); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1024, (no. 6033).

3. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 632, (no. 3759).

4. Abū Dā‘ūd Sulaymān ibn al-Ash‘ath al-Sajistānī, *Sunan*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-jīl, 1992), 253-254, (no. 4799); Abū Īsā Muḥammad ibn Īsā al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-gharb al-islāmī, 1998), 535-536, (no. 2002).

fasts and the night prayers.”⁵

1. Basic Issues

وَنَفْسٌ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا فَاللَّهُمَّا فُجُورُهَا وَقُوَّاهَا قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا (٩١ : ٧-١٠)

And the soul bears witness and the perfection given to it, then [God] inspired it with its evil and its good that he succeeded who purified it and he failed who corrupted it. (91:7-10)

What is the means through which a person can know what good and evil is? This is the most fundamental question of moral philosophy. In the above quoted verses, the Qur’ān has made it clear that just as the Almighty has blessed a person with eyes to see and ears to hear, similarly, he has blessed him with a faculty which distinguishes good and evil for him. A person is not mere body and intellect. He is also a moral being. This means that the ability to distinguish good from evil and the appreciation that good is good and evil is evil is innately ordained in him. In some other verses of the Qur’ān, this aspect is referred to as: (إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ (٧٦ : ٣) (We inspired in him the way of good and evil, (76:3)) and (وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ (٩٠ : ٩٠) (have We not shown him both paths? (90:10)). This appreciation of good from evil is a universal reality. Thus when the most evil of persons does something wrong, he tries to hide it in the first phase. When Adam’s son, Cain, tried to hide the body of his brother, Abel, after killing him, it was because he knew that he had committed a sin. Same is the case with good. A person loves what is good and respects and reveres it. When he establishes a society, he always sets up a system of justice in it. This is ample testimony of his innate ability to distinguish between good and evil. No doubt, at times, a person may justify a sin he commits, however, at the very time he invents excuses for this justification, he very well knows that he is inventing these excuses against his nature. The reason for this is that if someone else commits the same sin against him, he regards it to be an evil without any hesitation, and vehemently protests against that person. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: “Virtue is professing high morals and sin is that which pricks your heart and you would not like others to come to know of it.”⁶ It is this part of a person that the Qur’ān has termed as *nafs-i lawwāmah* (the reproaching soul)⁷ and has unequivocally stated:

بَلِ الْإِنْسَانُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ وَلَوْ أَلْقَى مَعَذِيرَةً (٧٥ : ١٤-١٥)

In fact, [in reality] man himself is a witness upon his own self however much he may put up excuses. (75:14-15)

5. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 253, (no. 4798); Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 536, (no. 2003).

6. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 1120, (no. 6516).

7. 75:2.

However, in the interpretation of this innate ability to distinguish between good and evil, there could have been differences because of different circumstances and periods of time and because of a variation in perception between people themselves. It is a great blessing of the Almighty that He has not even left any possibility for such differences and wherever there could have been a likelihood of any major difference, He delineated good and evil through His messengers. The guidance provided by these messengers is now eternally enshrined in the Qur'ān. This guidance testifies to whatever a person finds within himself. Furthermore, man's intuitive knowledge, in fact even his empirical knowledge, knowledge derived from natural and physical laws as well as knowledge derived from intellect all bear witness to it. Consequently, good and bad morals, as a result of this, can be fully ascertained.

In some narratives, this aspect has been explained through a parable: A straight path leads to the destination a person wants to reach. At both its sides are high walls. Both have doors in them on which curtains are hung. At the end of the path, there is a caller calling out to enter and to walk straight. In spite of this, if a person wants to lift the curtains of the doors in the right and left walls, a caller from the top says: "Beware! Do not lift the curtains. If you lift them, you will go inside." It was explained: This path is Islam, the walls are the limits prescribed by God, and doors are His prohibitions. The caller from the top is the counsellor of God which is found in the heart of every human being, and the caller at the end of the path is the Qur'ān:⁸

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلّٰتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا (٩١:٩)

Indeed this Qur'ān gives guidance to the path which is the most upright and gives glad tidings of a great reward to those among its believers who do good deeds. (17:9)

The second question is: What is the real motive which impels a person to purify his morals? The answer which the Qur'ān has given to this question in the verses (91:7-10) quoted earlier is that this motive is a person's perception which, on the basis of this very innate cognizance of good and evil, says that the results of good and evil cannot be the same. He feels that the very existence of the perception of good being good and evil being evil entails that the result of good should be good and that of evil should be evil. It becomes evident from this that a person will not be left unaccountable for his deeds; he will definitely be rewarded or punished as a result of his deeds. In these referred to verses, the Qur'ān has referred to this fate as success and failure respectively. As a result of this, the feelings of fear and hope arise in a person and become a source and motivation

8. Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 539-540, (no. 2859); Ahmād ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 5, 198, (no. 17182).

for him to cleanse his morals even though his natural inclinations oppose this. Then when a person professes faith, this feeling relates to the Almighty. It is now that the Qur'ān requires of him that the real motive of adhering to good morals and refraining from evil morals should only be the love of God, His pleasure and the fear of His displeasure – the God who knows the unseen, Who knows the secrets and is fully aware of every movement that goes on in this world as well as the slightest of change that takes place in the minds and hearts. The Qur'ān has stated this aspect at many places. At one instance, after emphasizing the fulfilment of obligations, it says:

فَاتَّ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَأَنَّ السَّيِّلَ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٣٨:٣٠)

So give their due to the next of kin, to the destitute, and to the traveller. That is best for those who want to please God; and it is these who shall surely prosper. (38:38)

The best examples of people in whom these morals are personified are the prophets of God. About the Prophet Muhammad (sws), the Qur'ān says:

الَّذِي يُؤْتِي مَالَهُ يَتَرَكُّ وَمَا لَأَحَدٌ عِنْهُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ تُجْزَى إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءً وَجْهَ رَبِّهِ الْأَعَلَىٰ (٩٢:١٨ - ٢٠)

Who spends his wealth to purify his soul, and does not confer favours on anyone for recompense but only to seek the countenance of his Lord, Most High. (92:18-20)

It is generally accepted that the foundation of good deeds is good intention. The Prophet (sws) has also referred to this fact in these subtle words: إنما الأفعال بالنيات (the deeds of a person are based on his intentions).⁹ This motive cleanses a person's intentions completely. Thus none of his deeds after this is for show and pretence, and if it is, then he soon or late tries to cleanse it of such filth.

The most effective explanation of this directive of the Qur'ān is reported by Abū Hurayrah (rta). He narrates from the Prophet (sws) that on the Day of Reckoning the foremost among people whose fate shall be decided would be scholars of the Qur'ān or those who had been killed in *jihād* or those who had been blessed with wealth by the Almighty. They shall be brought over and the Almighty will remind them of His favours. They will acknowledge these favours. The Almighty will then inquire from them: "What did you do in benefiting from them?" The scholar will reply: "I was educated and then I educated others and recited the Qur'ān before other people to call them towards You." The soldier will say: "I fought in Your way and was killed." The rich person will say: "I spent on every occasion on which you are pleased on spending." The Almighty will say: "All of this was done by you so that people should call you a scholar, a brave person and a generous person

9. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1, (no. 1); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 853, (no. 4927).

[respectively]; so you have been called so in the world.” It shall thus be ordered and they shall be dragged faceward into Hell.¹⁰

The third question which relates to moral philosophy is: What is the objective of this effort? Scholars have given different answers to this question. One group thinks that it is happiness. Another group is of the opinion that it is perfection. A third regards it to be an obligation for the sake of it. The above quoted verses (91:7-10) clearly say that this objective is purification as a result of which man shall be bestowed with God's eternal kingdom. A little deliberation shows that this answer of the Qur'ān automatically encompasses all the viewpoints of moral scholars just referred to. This is because it is through purification of faith and deeds that a person achieves perfection; true happiness is also achieved through this and if ever an obligation is discharged without any greed, then it is through this. It is this state of the soul which the Qur'ān calls the "contented soul" and gives it glad tidings of being the recipient of the pleasure of God and vice versa:

يَا أَنْتَهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَى رَبِّكَ رَاضِيَةً مَرْضِيَّةً فَادْخُلُنِي فِي عِبَادِي وَادْخُلُنِي حَتَّىٰ (٨٩)

(۲۰ - ۲۷:

O you whose heart remained content [with his Lord in times of comfort and distress]! Return unto your Lord, such that He is pleased with you and you are pleased with Him. [Return] and enter among My servants and enter My Paradise. (89:27-30)

Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī writes:

... these words are a tribute from God. They shall be addressed to people who shall be congratulated for achieving great success in the sphere they had been tested by their Lord. They have returned to their Lord with the achievement that they have proven in good and bad circumstances that they were content with the will of their Lord and at the same time they have been granted the coveted status of being the favoured ones of the Lord. Just as they have never complained to Him at any stage, in the same manner their Lord has not found them below His standards at any stage. They are pleased with Him and He is pleased with them.¹¹

2. Fundamental Principle

لَعْنَكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ (٩٠:١٦)

God enjoins you to justice, goodness and spending on the kindred, and forbids

10. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 852-853, (no. 4923).

11. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 9, 362.

lewdness, evil and arrogance. He admonishes you so that you may take heed. (16:90)

Outlined in these verses is the fundamental principle of the guidance provided by the Qur'ān in this regard. The bases on which man's nature requires of him to adopt good morals and leave bad ones are explained in these verses. These principles of good and evil are in conformity with human nature and hence they have been acknowledged in divine religions. The ten commandments of the Torah are based on these and the Qur'ān too has actually explained them as part of its moral directives.

We shall elucidate them here.

The first thing which the verse directs is justice ('adl). This means that whatever obligation is imposed on a person viz-a-viz a fellow human, he discharges it the way it exactly is and in an impartial manner, whether his fellow human being is weak or powerful and whether he is liked or disliked by us. The Qur'ān says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُوْنُوا قَوَامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسْكُمْ أَوْ الْوَالِدَيْنَ وَالْأَقْرَبَيْنَ إِنْ يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا فَلَا تَتَبَعَّدُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا وَإِنْ تَلُوْوا أَوْ تُعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ حَسِيرًا (١٣٥:٤)

Believers! Adhere to justice by bearing witness for God, even though it be against yourselves, your parents, or your kinsfolk. If someone is rich or poor, God is worthy that His law be followed for both. So [by leaving aside the guidance of God] do not be led by base-desires, lest you swerve from the truth and [remember] if you distort [what is the truth and what is just] or evade [it], God is well aware of all your deeds. (4:135)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُوْنُوا قَوَامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَحْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَآنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَا تَعْدِلُوا اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَيْرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (٨:٥)

Believers! Be those who adhere to justice by bearing witness for God. Your animosity for some people should not induce you to turn away from justice. Be just; this is nearer to piety. Have fear of God; indeed, God is well aware of all your deeds. (5:8)

The second thing mentioned in the verse is goodness (*ihsān*). It is over and above justice and is the pinnacle of ethics and morality. It means that not only should a right be fulfilled, but that it be fulfilled in a manner that a person is generous and considerate in this regard. A person should give more than what is due on him and should be happy to take what is less than his due. It is this attitude which develops in a society the values of sympathy, compassion, sacrifice, sincerity, gratitude and magnanimity. It is a result of these values that life becomes sweet and blessed.

The third thing mentioned is spending on the near ones. It is one of the most

important corollaries of goodness and determines one of its specific forms. It means that the near ones are not merely worthy of justice and goodness from a person, they also deserve to be thought of as having a share in one's wealth. They should never be abandoned in case of need and deprivation and like a person's own family, their needs should also, as far as possible, be generously fulfilled.

In contrast, the verse has prohibited three things also.

The first of these is lewdness (*fahshā'*). It connotes fornication, homosexuality and similar acts of lewdness.

The second thing is evil (*munkar*). It is the opposite of *ma'rūf* and refers to evils which mankind has generally recognized as evils, has always called them evils and so obvious is their evil that no argument is needed to prove it. In every good tradition of religion and culture, they are regarded as bad. At another instance, the Qur'ān, by using the word *ithm* for them, has clarified that they connote acts which are instrumental in usurping the rights of others.

The third thing is arrogance and rebelliousness (*baghi*). This of course means that a person takes undue advantage of his power and influence, exceeds his limits and tries to usurp the rights of others whether they are of his Creator or of his fellow human beings. The Qur'ān says:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبُّكَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْإِثْمُ وَالْبَغْيُ بَعْيْرُ الْحَقِّ (٧:٣٣)

Tell them: "My Lord has forbidden all lewd acts – whether hidden or open – and evil and wrongful rebelliousness." (7:33)

3. Moral Standards

لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَيْهَا آخَرَ فَتَقْعُدْ مَذْمُومًا مَخْنُدُواً وَقَضَى رَبُّكَ أَلَا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ
إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَيْلَعَنَ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبِيرُ أَحْدُهُمَا أَوْ كَلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفْ وَلَا تَتَهَرَّهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا
كَرِيمًا وَأَخْفَضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبُّ ارْحَمَهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا رَبِّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا
فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ إِنْ تَكُونُوا صَالِحِينَ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لِلْأَوَّلَيْنَ غَفُورًا وَآتَ ذَا الْقُرْبَى حَقَّهُ وَالْمُسْكِنَ وَابْنَ
السَّبِيلِ وَلَا تُبَدِّرْ تَبَدِّيْرًا إِنَّ الْمُبَدِّرِيْنَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ وَكَانَ الشَّيَطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كُفُورًا وَإِمَّا تُعَرِّضَنَّ
عَنْهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ رَحْمَةِ مِنْ رَبِّكَ تَرْجُوهَا فَقُلْ لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَيْسُورًا وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَعْلُولَةً إِلَى عَنْكَ وَلَا
تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدْ مَلُومًا مَحْسُورًا إِنْ رَبِّكَ يَسْطُرُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِعِيَادَهِ
خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أُولَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةً إِمْلَاقٍ تَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ إِنْ قَتَلْتُمْ كَانَ خَطْءًا كَبِيرًا وَلَا
تَتَرْبُيْوَ الرَّنِيْنِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَمَنْ قَتَلَ
مَظْلُومًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لَوْلَيْهِ سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يُسْرِفْ فِي الْقَتْلِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مَنْصُورًا وَلَا تَتَرْبُيْوَ مَالَ الْبَيْتِمِ إِلَّا
بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّى يَدْلِعَ أَشْدَهُ وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْؤُلًا وَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذَا كَلَمْ

وَرَأُتُوا بِالْقَسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ
وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْؤُلًا وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ
وَلَنْ تَبْلُغَ الْجَبَالَ طُولًا كُلُّ ذَلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئَةً عَنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوهًا ذَلِكَ مِمَّا أُوْحَى إِلَيْكَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ
الْحِكْمَةِ وَلَا تَحْمِلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَيْهَا آخِرَ فَتَّاقِي فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَلُومًا مَذْهُورًا (١٧: ٢٢-٣٩)

Serve no other god except God, lest [on the Day of Judgement] you are left blameworthy and disgraceful. And [remember that] your Lord has enjoined you to worship none but Him, and to treat well your parents. If either or both of them attain old age in your life before you, show them no sign of impatience, nor scold them while answering; but speak to them with good etiquette and treat them with humility and tenderness and say: "Lord, be merciful to them the way they nursed me in childhood." Your Lord fully knows what is in your hearts; if you remain obedient [to them, then you should know that] He forgives those who turn to Him. And give to the near of kin their due, and also the destitute and to the traveller. And do not squander your wealth wastefully, for the wasteful are Satan's brothers; and Satan is ever-ungrateful to his Lord. And if you have to disregard [those in need] because you are seeking your Lord's bounty of which you are waiting, then speak to them affectionately. And do not be miserly or prodigal [that as a result of it] you should either earn reproach or be reduced to indigence. Indeed your Lord gives abundantly to whom He pleases and sparingly to whom He pleases. He is aware of His servants and is observing them. And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them also and for you because killing them is a heinous crime.

And do not even go near adultery because it is blatant lewdness and a very evil path. And do not wrongfully kill any person whose life has been held sacred by God and [remember that] if someone is slain unjustly, We have given his heir the authority. Then he should also not exceed limits in his revenge because he has been helped. And do not approach the wealth of orphans except in a just manner, until they reach maturity. And keep your promises because you shall be held accountable for promises. And give full measure, when you measure, and weigh with correct scales. This is better and fairer as far as the consequences are concerned. And do not go after what you know not because eyes, ears, and heart – all of them shall be questioned. And do not walk conceitedly on the earth because neither can you split the earth, nor can you rival the mountains in stature. The evil of each of these to your Lord is very displeasing.

This is the wisdom which your Lord has revealed to you. [Hold on steadfastly to it] and [in the end, listen once again:] serve no other deity besides God, lest [as a result] you should be cast into Hell condemned and rejected. (17:22-39)

These verses explain the basic principle which has been concisely put earlier. They clearly state what is morally sound and what is morally unsound. A little deliberation shows that this section of verses begins with the prohibition of polytheism and also ends on its emphatic forbiddance. Such a style is adopted in the Qur'ān to highlight the importance of something. Here, the objective is to delineate the fact that it is the belief in monotheism which is like a boundary wall that encircles the directives of religion mentioned in these verses. If this boundary wall is damaged, everything that lies within it is exposed to danger. No doubt, this is the supreme status of monotheism which these verses mention. It is the greatest and the most fundamental requisite of justice which the Qur'ān directs its followers to dispense. For this very reason, polytheism is called a great wrong (*zulmuṇ ‘azīmuṇ*) by the Qur'ān (31:13). The Qur'ān has also clearly stated the result of this great wrong; it is an unforgivable sin in the eyes of God in retribution of which people shall be humiliated and thrown into Hell:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَعْفُرُ أَن يُشْرِكَ بِهِ وَعَفْرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَمَن يُشْرِكُ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرَى إِنْهَا
عَظِيمًا (٤٨:٤)

God will not forgive those who [deliberately] associate partners with Him; however, He will forgive lesser sins [according to His law] for whom He wills. And [without doubt] he who associates partners with God is guilty of fabricating a great sin. (4:48)

What is polytheism? Associating other gods with God Almighty is termed as polytheism (*shirk*) in the terminology of the Qur'ān. It means:

a) to regard someone to have the same genre as that of God or to regard God to have the same genre as someone; or

b) to regard someone to have a role in creation or in running the affairs of the creatures and in this manner make someone God's peer to some extent or another.

Examples of the first type of polytheism are the beliefs of Christians and the Polytheists of Arabia about Jesus (sws) and Mary (sws) and about the angels respectively. The belief of *wahdat al-wujūd* is another example of this.

Examples of the second type are the beliefs regarding Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva in Hinduism and the beliefs regarding *Ghaws*, *Qutub*, *Abdāl*, *Dāta* and *Gharīb Nawāz* among Muslims. Belief in evil spirits and stars and in the powers of Satan, also belong to this category of polytheism.

The Qur'ān says:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُوَلَّدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُواً أَحَدٌ (١١٢ : ١-٤)

Proclaim [O Prophet!] That God is alone. He is rock of shelter for every one. He is neither anyone's father nor anyone's son; and there is none like Him. (112:1-4)

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُعْشِي اللَّيْلَ

النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَيْثُ أَلَاَ اللَّهُ الْحَكْمُ وَالْأَمْرُ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٥٤:٧)

Your Lord is the God, who created the heavens and the earth in six days and then ascended His throne. He covers the day with the night which swiftly follows it. And He created the sun and the moon and the stars which are subservient to His command. Make it clear: He is the Creator and He runs the affairs as well. Blessed is God, Lord of the Universe. (7:54)

The adherents of these views also believe that the Almighty has granted these partners of God the ability to have access to a *ghayb* (the unseen) and the authority to change some decision of the Almighty in this world and in the Hereafter on their recommendation. The Qur'ān has negated both these:

About the first, it says:

قُلْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنِ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُعْتَقُونَ (٦٥:٢٧)

Say: "No one in the heavens or on earth has knowledge of the unseen except God [and those who are given this status of having access to the unseen] do not even know when they will be raised to life." (27:65)

About the second, it says:

قُلْ لِلَّهِ الشَّفَاعَةُ جَمِيعًا لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ شُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٤٤:٣٩)

Say: "Intercession is wholly in the hands of God. To Him belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. Then to Him shall you be recalled." (39:44)

Such people would signify their superstitions in pictures and statues. The Qur'ān has called it a filth and directed us to abstain from it: فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ (٣٠:٢٢) (guard yourselves against the filth of these idols and abstain from falsehoods which you fabricate about them regarding God, (22:30)). On this very basis, the Prophet (sws) said that on the Day of Judgement those who make these portraits and statues shall be severely punished and they shall be asked to put life into the beings they considered to be living and having the authority of causing harm and benefit to human beings:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَصْنَعُونَ هَذِهِ الصُّورَ يُعَذَّبُونَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُقَالُ لَهُمْ أَحْيِوْ مَا حَلَّتُمْ

Those who make such pictures shall be punished on the Day of Judgement. It shall be said to them: "Put life in whatever you have made."¹²

12. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 1042-1043, (no. 5951). It is these portraits and pictures which the Prophet (sws) has forbidden. Pictures not made for this purpose are not prohibited.

Charms and amulets which depict requests of help from such beings also have this filth. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that such incantations and blowing and charms and amulets which are used to create separation between a husband and wife are *shirk* (polytheism).¹³

Swearing an oath by someone other than Allah has also been regarded as *shirk* by the Prophet (sws) because when a person swears any oath by someone, he actually makes him a witness over some incident and in this manner it is as if the person regards him as someone who has knowledge of *ghayb* [the unseen] like the Almighty. It is reported:

مَنْ حَلَفَ بِعَيْرِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ أَشْرَكَ

He who swore by any one other than Allah has committed an act of polytheism.¹⁴

In this regard, certain polytheistic attitudes are also worth consideration:

In the Qur'ān, God Almighty has mentioned a parable of a person whose wealth, riches, number of friends and associates and splendour and grandeur induced in him so much pride and vanity that he thought that whatever he has is as a result of his abilities and of the knowledge and intellect he possesses and shall always remain with him; the Day of Judgement would never come and if ever it would, he would find all this in store for him there – in fact much more than this. The Qur'ān says that one day his flourishing orchard was destroyed, the baselessness of his perishable belongings became evident and he cursed his fortune and expressed his grief on associating partners with God:

وَأَحْيِطَ بِشَرِّهِ فَأَصْبِحُ يُقْلِبُ كَفِيهِ عَلَى مَا أَنْفَقَ فِيهَا وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوضِ شَهَابَةِ وَيَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ
أَشْرَكْ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا (٤٢:١٨)

And it happened that all his fruit was destroyed, and seeing his vines had tumbled down upon their trellises wrung his hands with grief at all that he had spent on the garden and cried: “Would that I had served no other gods besides my Lord!” (18:42)

Same is the case with showing-off. If endeavours which should be done merely for God are done for others, then this would mean that they have taken the place of God. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: “The Almighty says: ‘Of all those that are associated [with Me] I am the most indifferent towards association; so anyone who has associated someone with me in any of his works, I am not with him and he is [actually] with whom he has associated with me.’”¹⁵

13. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 9, (no. 3883).

14. Ibid., vol. 3, 220, (no. 3251).

15. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīh*, 1292, (no. 7475).

Superstitions that human beings become target of are of this genre too. Thus the Prophet (sws) has warned people about them. He has also preventively stopped people from certain things which though do not fall in the ambit of polytheism are liable to lead to it.

Ibn ‘Abbās (rta) narrates that when one night a star fell, the Prophet (sws) asked: “What would you say about these in the age of ignorance?” People replied: “We thought that this would happen at the birth or death of a great personality.” The Prophet (sws) remarked: “No, stars do not fall at the birth or death of someone.”¹⁶

Zayd ibn Khālid Juhānī (rta) mentions that during the year of the Ḥudaybiyah-truce, rain fell at night. In the morning, the Prophet (sws) addressed the people after the prayer and said: “Do you know what your Lord has said?” The people said: “God and His Messenger know better.” The Prophet (sws) said: “The Almighty has said: ‘Today some of My people have woken up as believers and others as disbelievers; those who have said that this rain is a blessing from God are my believers and those who said that water rains down on us from such and such a point in the constellation, they are My disbelievers and the believers in stars.’”¹⁷

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar (rta) says that the Prophet (sws) said: “The solar and lunar eclipses do not take place because of someone’s death, they are two signs from among the signs of God; hence, if you see them, offer the prayer.”¹⁸

One of the wives (rta) of the Prophet (sws) reported from him: “A person who goes to an ‘arrāf¹⁹ to find out about his possession and believes in him, the prayers he offers in forty days shall not be accepted.”²⁰

Ā’ishah (rta) narrates that when people asked about soothsayers, the Prophet (sws) replied: “They are nothing.” People said: “Some of their prophesies turn out to be true.” The Prophet (sws) said: “Satan is able to catch a few things and like a hen cries out in the ears of his friends. Then these people add a hundred other things to it and communicate it to people.”²¹

Abū Hurayrah (rta) says that the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: “There is no transfer through physical contact nor misfortune nor is there any snake of hunger in the stomach and neither does a bird come out from the skull of a dead person.”²²

Jābir (rta) narrates that besides this, he also said that there is no basis of

16. Ibid., 989-990, (no. 5819).

17. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 137, (no. 846); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 49, (no. 231).

18. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 167, (no. 1042); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 369, (no. 2121).

19. People who claim to have knowledge of things which get lost.

20. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 990, (no. 5821); Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 5, 17, (no. 16202).

21. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1305, (no. 7561); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 989, (no. 5817).

22. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1016, (no. 5757); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 985, (no. 5788). These are some superstitions of pre-Islamic Arabia in which people of those times believed in.

supernatural phenomenon encountered in the wilderness.²³

‘Umar (rta) says that he heard the Prophet saying: “Do not exaggerate about me the way the Nazarenes did about Christ. I am only a servant of God. So call me God’s servant and Messenger only.”²⁴

Ibn ‘Abbās (rta) narrates that a person came to the Prophet and during the course of his conversation said: “Whatever God wills and you will.” The Prophet immediately corrected him and said: “You have equated me with God? Just say: “Whatever God alone wills.”²⁵

The details of other directives which are mentioned in these verses are as follows:

i. Worshipping God

The first directive is that since there is no god except God, only He should be worshipped. The essence of this worship (*ibādah*) is humility and servility, as explained in the second preamble of this book: “The True Religion”. The first manifestation of this essence is serving the Almighty. Since a person also has a practical life in this world, this servitude relates to this practical life as well and in this manner becomes inclusive of obedience. The manifestations in the first case are glorifying Him and singing His praises, praying to him and supplicating before Him, kneeling and prostrating before Him, making vows (to please Him), offering animal sacrifice and doing *i’tikāf*.

In the second case, a person, after regarding someone as an independent law giver and ruler, considers that he has the authority to give directives of what is forbidden and what is not and what is allowed and what is not and submits before all his directives. It is the verdict of God Almighty that none of the above mentioned things can be reserved for someone other than Him. The words:

فَقَضَى رَبُّكَ أَلَا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَيْاهُ²⁶

declare this verdict. Thus if a person glorifies someone and sings his praises or prays and supplicates before someone, kneels and prostrates before him or presents vows before him or offers animal sacrifice to him or does *i’tikāf* for him or regards him to have the authority of prohibiting or allowing things, then this would mean that he has refused to accept this verdict of God. Among the addressees of the Qur’ān, those who were guilty of this sin were clearly told of their folly.

Those who prostrated themselves before the sun and the moon were told:

لَا تَسْجُدُوا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ وَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُنَّ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ إِيمَانًا بَعْدُونَ (٤١: ٣٧)

Do not prostrate yourselves before the sun or the moon; rather prostrate yourselves before God, who created them both, if you would truly serve Him. (41:37)

23. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 986, (no. 5795).

24. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 580, (no. 3445).

25. Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 1, 370, (no. 1965).

Those who prayed and supplicated before some of their ancestors were told:

وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَحْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلِقُونَ أَمْوَاتٍ عَيْنُ أَحْيَاءٍ وَمَا يَسْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ
يُعْشَونَ (٢٠-٢١ : ١٦)

And those whom these call besides God are themselves created, they create nothing: They are dead, not living and don't even know when they will be raised to life. (16:20-21)

Those who regarded their jurists and saints to possess divine authority and would invoke their help were warned thus:

أَنْخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أَمْرُوا إِلَّا يُعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا
وَاحِدًا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَانُهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (٩ : ٣١)

They have made their scholars and their monks their Lord besides God and also Jesus, the son of Mary, even though they had been directed to worship one God only. There is no god but Him. Exalted is He above those they deify besides Him! (9:31)

Those who presented as sacrifice and vows, the produce and cattle created by God before other deities were warned thus by the Qur'ān:

وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ مِنْذِرًا ذَرَّا مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ نَصِيبًا فَقَالُوا هَذَا لِلَّهِ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَهَذَا لِشُرْكَائِنَا فَمَا كَانَ
لِشُرْكَائِهِمْ فَلَا يَصِلُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانَ لَلَّهِ فَهُوَ يَصِلُّ إِلَى شُرْكَائِهِمْ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ (٦ : ١٣٦)

And they set aside a share of their produce and cattle for God. They then say that in their opinion: "This is for God and this is for those whom we associate with God." Furthermore, the share of these associates does not reach God but the share of God can reach these associates.²⁶ What an evil judgement they pass! (6:136)

The Qur'ān has thus regarded this authority to declare something as lawful or unlawful as baseless besides regarding as baseless the prohibitions stipulated by the Arabs for certain animals called *bahīrah*, *sā'ibah*, *waṣīlah* and *hām*.

Bahīrah is the name given to a she camel which has five offspring, the last of which is a male. The ears of such a camel are slit and it is left free.

Sā'ibah is the name given to a camel which is left free once some vow has been fulfilled.

26. This is a mention of their compound foolishness according to which if a goat dedicated to their idol dies, then it shall be compensated by the one dedicated to God; however, if some calamity befalls on the share dedicated to God, then it shall not be compensated by the share reserved for the idols.

As for *waṣīlah*, some people would vow that if a goat would give birth to male offspring, they would present it before their idols, and if gives birth to female offspring, they would keep it to themselves; now if she would give birth to male and female offspring simultaneously, they would call it *waṣīlah* and would not present such male offspring to their idols.

Hām is the name of a bull which has given birth to many offspring. It would be left free.

The Qur'ān says:

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَحِيرَةٍ وَلَا سَاقِيَةٍ وَلَا وَصِيلَةٍ وَلَا حَامٍ وَلَكِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُفْتَنُونَ عَلَى الْأَكْذَبِ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقُلُونَ (٥:١٠٣)

God has sanctioned neither a *bahīrah*, nor a *sā'ibah*, nor a *waṣīlah*, nor a *hām* but these disbelievers fabricate falsehoods about God and most of them have no sense. (5:103)

It is this very verdict of the Qur'ān regarding the worship of God on account of which the Prophet (sws) forbade people from making graves places of prostration and said that may God curse the Jews and Christians for they have made the graves of their prophets as mosques.²⁷

The fact that this was his last counsel for the Muslims before his demise shows its importance.

ii. Treating Parents with Kindness

The second directive is that parents should be treated with kindness. This directive is present in all divine scriptures. Besides, this verse, the Qur'ān has also mentioned it elsewhere in 29:8, 31:14-15 and 46:15. There is no doubt in the fact that among human beings a person's foremost obligation is towards his parents. Thus after worshipping God, Muslims have been directed to fulfil it the foremost. The reason for this is that it is the parents who bring a person into existence and it is they who nourish and look after him. The way this directive is mentioned in 31:14-15 and 46:15 shows that among the parents it is the mother who has more right on the children:

وَوَصَّيْنَا إِلِّيْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَّانَهُ امْمَهُ وَهُنَّا عَلَى وَهْنِ وَفَصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلَوَالِدَيْكِ إِلَيْيِ
الْمَصْبِرِ (٤:٣١)

And We have counselled man regarding his parents. His mother bore him with much [hardships which resulted in] weakness upon weakness, and he is not weaned before he is two years of age. [We counselled him:] "Show gratitude to Me and to your parents and towards Me is the return." (31:14)

27. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 76, (no. 436). Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 215, 390, (nos. 1184, 3251).

In the upbringing of a child, a father too plays no less a role; however, the hardships which a mother bears during her pregnancy, at childbirth and then during breastfeeding are unparalleled. For this very reason, the Prophet (sws) has regarded a mother to have three times more right on her children than the father.²⁸ However, regardless of this difference, the Almighty has counselled man to be thankful to both his parents the foremost after God. This gratitude is not to be expressed merely through the tongue. There are some essential requisites of this gratitude which the Qur'ān has related in the above quoted verses of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl.

The first thing mentioned is that a person should treat his parents in a manner that he shows respect to them not only outwardly but also from the depth of his heart. He should not show any aversion to them in his heart and also not say something before them which is against manners. In fact, he should treat them with love, affection and decency and in a manner that reflects his obedience to them. He should obey them and in the frailty of old age comfort them and be a means of reassurance to them.

In these verses, the objective for which old age has been specially mentioned is explained thus by Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī:

... it is this period in which those people regard their parents to be a burden who forget their sacrifices and selfless behaviour in their childhood. Obedient and respectful children remember that the way they were once nurtured by their parents when they were nothing but a lump of meat and bones, in a similar manner their parents have now been consigned to them when they are no more than skeletons; it is now their duty to repay them their favours. However, not everyone remembers this. These verses are in fact a reminder for this reality. In fact, the truth of the matter is that parents deserve love, respect and good behaviour whatever may be their age.²⁹

The second thing mentioned in this verse is that a person should always show obedience and compliance to his parents and this obedience should arise from his love and affection for them. The Qur'ānic words used for this purpose are وَاحْفَظْ لَهُمَا حَنَاجَ الذلِّ مِنَ الرُّحْمَةِ. In it is the subtle insinuation that just as parents hide and protect their children the way birds do through their wings, in a similar manner, children too should hide and protect their parents in their wings of love and obedience. The reason is that if ever children can repay their parents for their care, it is through this attitude.

The third thing that is mentioned besides the above behaviour is that a person should keep praying for his parents that the way his parents raised him with affection and care, the Almighty should also shower His blessings on them in this old age. This prayer is a right of the parents on their children and it is also a

28. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1045, (no. 5971); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1117, (no. 6501).

29. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 4, 496.

reminder for a person to fulfil this right imposed on him. This prayer is also the motive for the feelings of love which the Almighty has demanded from the children in treating their parents with kindness. In Sūrah Luqmān are mentioned the limits of this kind treatment. However, since they belong to the *sharī‘ah*, they shall be dealt in the chapter “The Social Sharī‘ah” of this book.

Following are the directives of the Prophet (sws) in this regard:

Ibn Mas‘ūd (rta) reports that he asked the Prophet (sws): “Which deed does the Almighty like the most?” He replied: “To pray on time.” I asked: “Which after this?” He said: “Treating parents with kindness.”³⁰

Abū Hurayrah (rta) reports that the Prophet (sws) said: “Humiliation is for that person. Humiliation is for that person. Humiliation is for that person. People asked: “For whom O Messenger of God?” He replied: “A person whose both parents or any of them reached old age in his presence and in spite of this he was not able to enter Paradise.”³¹

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr (rta) says that once a person asked the Prophet (sws) to participate in *jihād*. At this, the Prophet (sws) inquired: “Are your parents alive?” The person replied in the affirmative. The Prophet (sws) then remarked: “Keep serving them. *This is jihād*.”³²

Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī (rta) says that a person from the people of Yemen migrated and came to the Prophet (sws) in order to participate in *jihād*. The Prophet (sws) asked: “Do you have any relative in Yemen?” He replied that he had his parents there. The Prophet (sws) remarked: “Did you seek their permission?” He said: “No.” The Prophet (sws) then said: “Go back and seek their permission, and if they grant permission, then only can you take part in *jihād*, otherwise keep serving them.”³³

Mu‘āwiyah narrated from his father Jāhimah (rta) that he came to the Prophet (sws) and said: “O Messenger of God! I would like to participate in *jihād* and have come to consult you [regarding this].” The Prophet asked: “Is your mother alive?” He said: “Yes.” At this, the Prophet said: “Stay with her and serve her because Paradise is beneath her feet.”³⁴

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr (rta) narrates from the Prophet (sws): “The pleasure of the Almighty rests in the pleasure of the father and the displeasure of the Almighty resides in the displeasure of the father.”³⁵

Abū al-Dardā’ (rta) says that he heard the Prophet (sws) saying that the best door to Paradise is the father; so, if you want you can waste him and if you want you can protect him.³⁶

30. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 89-90, (no. 527); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 52, (no. 252).

31. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1119, (no. 6510).

32. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 496, (no. 3004).

33. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 17, (no. 2530).

34. Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 426, (no. 3106).

35. Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 465-466, (no. 1899).

36. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 465, (no. 1900).

‘Amr ibn Shu‘ayb narrates from his mother who narrates from his grandfather that once a person came to the Prophet (sws) and said: “I have some wealth and I also have children but my father needs this wealth.” The Prophet (sws) replied: “Both you and your wealth belong to your father.”³⁷

In relationships which develop with other people besides the parents, a person should have this same attitude in proportion to their closeness to him. At another place, the Qur’ān has unequivocally stated this in the following words:

وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنْبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا (٣٦:٤)

Serve God and associate none with Him. And show kindness to parents and to relatives and to orphans and to the destitute, to neighbours who are your relatives and those you do not know and to those that keep company with you and to the traveller and to the slaves also because God does not like the arrogant and the conceited. (4:36)

(1) Other Relatives

It is evident from the verse that after the parents, a person’s foremost obligation is towards his other relatives and kindred. The expression *ṣilāh-i rahmī* is used for the kind treatment of these people. The basis of a relationship between human beings can be multifarious: People can be class mates, neighbours, friends or companions; they can have common interests or common professions and this basis can even be being citizens of the same country; however, in all these relationships the greatest relationships are the blood relatives. This is the knot tied by the Almighty and it is not befitting for a human being to untie it. Thus safeguarding the rights of this relationship is a foremost obligation:

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا (٤:٤)

And fear God, in whose name you plead with one another, and beware about your relatives also. Indeed, God is Ever-Watching you. (4:1)

The importance of this treatment of the kindred and near ones is also found in the narratives of the Prophet (sws).

Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrates from the Prophet (sws) that the word رحم originates from رحمان. Thus God has addressed it and said: “He who has joined you, I will join him with Me, and he who severed you, I will also dissociate from him.”³⁸

Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrates that at another instance, the Prophet (sws) adopted even more subtle words to describe this: When God had created His creation, رحم

37. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 287, (no. 3530).

38. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1048, (no. 5988).

(womb) stood in His presence and said: "This is the place of the one who seeks your refuge from breaking relations." God said: "Indeed, are you not happy with the fact that the one who joins you, I will join him with Me, and he who severs you, I will also dissociate from him."³⁹

Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī (rta) said that a person came to the Prophet (sws) and said: "O Messenger of God! Tell me something which can take me to Paradise." He replied: "Serve God and do not associate anyone with Him; be diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh* and fulfil the rights of the kindred."⁴⁰

Jubayr ibn Muṭ‘im (rta) reports from the Prophet (sws): "Any person who is guilty of breaking blood relations will not enter Paradise."⁴¹

Anas (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) said that he who likes that his earnings increase and his life should be endowed with blessings should fulfil the rights of blood relations.⁴²

The pinnacle of this fulfilling of rights is to fulfil them even for those who sever blood relations.⁴³

(2) The Orphan and the Needy

After relatives and the kindred, the orphans and the needy are also included in the list. It follows from this that they too fall in the category of the kindred; hence every Muslim should regard them to be so and with this motivation patronize them and be of service to them. According to the Qur’ān, the very first step of the objective of attaining piety and goodness a person has been asked to achieve in this world is to free slaves and fulfil the needs of the orphans and the needy:

فَلَا اقْتَحِمُ الْعَقَبَةَ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْعَقَبَةُ فَلَكُ رَقَبَةٌ أَوْ إِطْعَامٌ فِي يَوْمٍ ذِي مَسْعَةٍ تِيمًا ذَا مَقْرَبَةٍ أَوْ
مِسْكِينًا ذَا مُنْزَهَةٍ (٩٠: ١٦-١١)

But he did not attempt the steep path. And what do you understand what this steep path is? [It is] the freeing of a slave or feeding, in days of famine, an orphan near of kin or a needy [down] in the dust. (90:11-16)

The style adopted in the following verses of Sūrah Fajr shows that the requirement is not merely helping the orphans and the needy but the real requirement is to give them a respectable status in the society:

39. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1048, (no. 5987); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1121, (no. 6518).

40. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1047-1048, (no. 5983); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 27-28, (no. 104).

41. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1048, (no. 5984); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1121, (no. 6520, 6521).

42. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1048, (no. 5986); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1121, (no. 6523).

43. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1048-1049, (no. 5991).

كَلَّا بَلْ لَا تُؤْكِرُ مُونَ الْيَتِيمَ وَلَا تَحَاضُرُونَ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمُسْكِينِ (٨٩:١٧-١٩)

Certainly Not! You do not show respect to the orphans and do not urge one another to feed the needy. (89:17-19)

The Prophet (sws) while referring to the reward of this treatment has said: “I and those who take care of the orphans financially will be close to one another in Paradise the way two fingers are close to one another.”⁴⁴

(3) Neighbour, Traveller and Slave

After this, neighbours, travellers and slaves are mentioned in the verse and Muslims are asked to treat them kindly too. In spite of the change in society, even today travellers become needy in some respect or another; however, slavery no longer exists. The measures adopted by Islam in eradicating it are mentioned in the chapter “The Social Sharī‘ah” of this book.

With regard to one’s neighbours, the view of the Qur’ān is unique in the history of religion and morality. It is generally considered that a neighbour is a person who lives next door or nearby; however, the Qur’ān says that a neighbour is of three types:

First, someone who is one’s neighbour and also one’s relative. The Qur’ānic words used are **الجَارُ ذِي الْقُرْبَى** and it is mentioned the foremost. It means that among other neighbours, he is more worthy of kind treatment.

Second, someone who is not one’s relative, yet he is one’s neighbour. The words used are **الجَارُ الْجَنِيبُ** (unfamiliar neighbour). This unfamiliarity can be on the basis of being a relative and also on the basis of having a different religion. After a neighbour who is a relative, comes this neighbour.

Third, a person who accompanies us in travel or while being stationed somewhere. **الصَّاحِبُ بِالْجَنَبِ** are the words used for such a person. Muslims have been directed to treat him kindly too the way other neighbours should be.

Following are the narratives of the Prophet (sws) regarding this treatment:

Abū Shurayḥ (rta) narrates from the Prophet (sws): “By God! He shall not be a believer; by God! He shall not be a believer.” People asked: “Who? O Messenger of God!” The Prophet said: “A person whose neighbour is not secure from his mischief.”⁴⁵

He also narrates from the Prophet (sws): “He who believes in God and in the Hereafter should respect his neighbour.”⁴⁶

Ā’ishah (rta) reports from the Prophet (sws): “Gabriel emphasized upon me the rights of a neighbour so much that I thought that soon he would make him a share holder in the inheritance [of a person].”⁴⁷

44. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1050, (no. 6005); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1290-1291, (no. 7469).

45. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1052, (no. 6016).

46. Ibid., 1052, (no. 6019).

47. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1052, (no. 6014); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1144-

Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (rta) says that the Prophet (sws) advised: “O Abū Dharr! When you cook curry, add extra water to it and remain aware about your neighbours.”⁴⁸

Abū Hurayrah (rta) said that the Prophet (sws) similarly advised women and said: “Muslim Women! No one should consider a gift to a lady who lives in the neighbourhood to be meagre even though it may be the hoof of a goat.”⁴⁹

iii. Spending in the Way of God

The third directive is to spend in the way of God. This means that just as a person spends on himself the blessings bestowed upon him by God, he should also spend them on his fellow brethren after fulfilling his personal and business needs. It is evident from the Qur’ān that two things are required for a person if he is to become a true servant of God: Firstly, one’s relationship with God should be established on right footings. Secondly, this relationship with other human beings should also be established on right footings. The first thing is achieved through the prayer which is the foremost expression of one’s love for God, and the second through spending in the way of God for this is the foremost expression of one’s love for one’s fellow human beings. The reward for this spending is also God’s love because whatever one spends he has it saved in the heavens, and in the words of the Prophet Jesus (sws), his heart too remains occupied at this place, (Matthew, 6:19-21). The Qur’ān has urged man to this at various instances in very effective styles. At one instance, it says:

وَأَنْفَقُوا مِنْ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ أَحَدُكُمُ الْمَوْتُ فَيَقُولَ رَبِّ لَوْلَا أَخْرَجْنِي إِلَى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ
فَأَصَدَّقَ وَأَكُنْ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (٦٣:٦٣)

And spend of that which We have given you before death befalls any of you and he says: “Lord! Why did you give me such a brief respite that I may have given in charity and [as a result] could have been among your pious people.” (63:10)

This spending in the way of God is the right of one’s relatives, orphans and the needy which must necessarily be fulfilled. In the verses of the Qur’ān under discussion, this fact is clearly mentioned. It is evident from this mention that any slackness in fulfilling this right can make a person a criminal who extorts the rights of people. Thus, at another instance, the Qur’ān has clearly stated that if a person starts amassing wealth while remaining indifferent to these rights, then this is hoarding and its punishment is the fire of Hell – from which every believer should seek refuge with the Almighty:

1145, (no. 6685).

48. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1145, (no. 6688).

49. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1052, (no. 6017).

وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنُزُونَ الْذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرُوهُمْ بَعْدَ أَلِيمٍ يَوْمَ يُحْمَى عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتَكُوَى بِهَا حِجَابُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وَظُهُورُهُمْ هَذَا مَا كَنَزْتُمْ لَا نَفْسٌ كُمْ فَذَوْقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنُزُونَ (٣٥-٣٤ : ٩)

And those that hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of God, give them glad tidings of a horrible punishment on the day when these [treasures of] gold and silver shall be heated in the fire of Hell, and their foreheads, sides, and backs branded with them. “These are the riches which you hoarded. Taste then what you have been hoarding.” (9:34-35)

It is for this very nature of the directive that if people who are bound to fulfil this right are for some reason compelled to disregard the needs of a deserving person at some time and it is expected that in future their circumstances would improve, then they should kindly treat the deserving person and promise him with help in future. The words **وَإِمَّا تُعْرِضَنَّ عَنْهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ تَرْجُوهَا فَقُلْ لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّيْسُورًا** point to this aspect.

Whether such spending is done in open or in secret, the Almighty says that every bit of it is in His knowledge. This means that He will also definitely reward a person as per His promise:

وَمَا أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ نَفَقَةً أَوْ نَذَرْتُمْ مِّنْ نَذْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُهُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ إِنْ تُبْدِوَا الصَّدَقَاتِ فَنَعِمَّا هِيَ وَإِنْ تُخْفُوهَا وَتُؤْتُوهَا الْفُقَرَاءُ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَيَكْفُرُ عَنْكُمْ مِّنْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَيْرٌ (٢٧١-٢٧٠ : ٢)

And [rest assured] that whatever you spend and whatever vows you make [you shall be fully rewarded for them] because God is fully aware of them and [those who turn away from this guidance of God and] wrong their souls will have none to help them [from the wrath of God]. If you spend openly then this too is a good thing, but to give to the poor and to give it secretly is better. [Through this], God will wipe out your sins and [there is absolutely no doubt that] God has knowledge of all your deeds. (2: 270-271)

Consequently, the Qur’ān says that the Almighty blesses this spending and with His favour transforms a mole into a mountain:

مَثُلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمِثْلِ حَيَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُبْلَةٍ مُّئْتَهُ حَيَّةٍ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلَيْهِ (٢٦١: ٢)

Those who spend their wealth in the way of God can be compared to a grain of corn which brings forth seven ears, each bearing a hundred grains. God [in accordance with His wisdom] provides in abundance [in this manner] to whom He wills; And [in reality] God is munificent and all-knowing. (2:261)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

This is a parable which depicts the manifold increase in the reward for spending wealth in the way of God. It is said that just as seven ears sprout from a corn and each ear will have a hundred grains, similarly the reward of a deed given to a person can be up to seven hundred times. Some Ḥadīth narratives also explain this theme. It is reported that the Prophet (sws) said that the reward of a good deed ranges from ten times to seven hundred times. This variation obviously depends on the nature of the deed, the time in which it is done and the internal and external circumstances of those who do the deed. If a good deed is done in difficult circumstances and with straitened resources, it will earn more reward and if a good deed is done in times of ease and with ample resources, its reward will be relatively less. The feelings of the people who do the deed also count. A good deed may be done with complete willingness of heart and enthusiasm and it may also be done half-heartedly and under compulsion. Obviously both would earn different reward. The verse depicts the maximum reward and it is said: “God provides in abundance [in this manner] to whom He wills.” This is a reference to the principle we have alluded to. Allah’s will is never against justice and wisdom. Hence this manifold reward is willed by Him only in favour of those who prove themselves worthy in accordance with the principle set for them.⁵⁰

This is further explained by saying that if this spending is done to please God and to discipline the soul, then this is the example of the person who plants an orchard not on land which is washed away by floods but on such high and even ground where the climate is also favourable so that if there is rain it bears double the fruit and if there is no rain, a light drizzle is sufficient to bear fruit because of conducive land and climatic conditions:

وَمَثَلُ الدِّينِ يُنْفَقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَتَشْيِتاً مِّنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ كَمَثَلٍ جَنَّةً بِرْبُورَةً أَصَابَاهَا وَابْلُ
فَآتَتْ أُكُلَّهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِنْ لَمْ يُصِبْهَا وَابْلُ فَطَلُّ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٢٦٥)

And those who spend their wealth to please God and to firmly attach their own souls [to the truth] are like an orchard which is on a high and level ground: if a heavy shower falls upon it, it yields up twice its normal produce; and even if a heavy shower does not fall on it, a drizzle is enough [to produce fruit. Keep this example in mind] and [rest assured that] God knows whatever you do. (2:265)

However, this reward is for spending done from one’s clean and pure wealth and which is not accompanied by hurting the person on whom it is spent and by emphasizing it as a favour. Presenting to God something which a person does not like for himself is a very mean act. Whatever we have is given to us by God. If

50. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 1, 613.

we give something to Him in His way and adopt a mean attitude in this, then in the words of Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, there is a strong chance that a person instead of pleasing the Almighty and disciplining his soul ends up distancing himself from the Almighty. Similarly, if a person keeps boasting of his favour on the recipient and hurts him, then this means that he does not have magnanimity because after being blessed with the motivation of spending on the poor such an attitude can only be adopted by petty-minded people – people who think that those on whom they have spent should always live under the burden of their generosity. Consequently, when this wish of theirs is not fulfilled, they always want to humiliate that person by taunting him. The Qur’ān says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا تَيْمِمُوا
الْغَيْثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُونَ وَلَا سُتُّمْ بِآخِذِيهِ إِلَّا أَنْ تُعْمَلُوا فِيهِ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِّي حَمِيدٌ (٢:٢٦٧)

Believers! Spend from your pure wealth and from that which We have brought out of the earth for you, and don't even think of spending something worthless [in the way of God] which you yourselves would not receive except with closed eyes. And you should know that God does not need [such spending from you] and He is glorious. (2:267)

At another place, the Qur’ān says:

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ لَا يَتَبَعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَنًا وَلَا أَدَى لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا
خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزُنُونَ قَوْلٌ مَعْرُوفٌ وَمَغْرِفَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ يَتَبَعُهَا أَذْيٌ وَاللَّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَلِيمٌ يَا
أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتُكُمْ بِالْمَنَنِ وَالْأَدَى كَمَلَذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِتَاءُ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ
وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفَوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ ثُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابْلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِمَّا
كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ... أَيُّوْذُ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ مِنْ تَحْيِلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ تَحْرِي
مِنْ تَحْنَاهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ الشَّمَرَاتِ وَأَصَابَهُ الْكُبُرُ وَلَهُ ذُرَيْةٌ ضُعَفَاءُ فَأَصَابَهَا إِعْصَارٌ فِيهِ نَارٌ
فَاحْتَرَقَتْ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٢:٢٦٦-٢٦٢)

Those who spend their wealth in the way of God and do not follow this spending by reminders of their generosity and insults have their reward with their Lord; they shall have nothing to fear [there] nor will they be sorrowful. A kind word and forgiveness [at unpleasant instances] is better than charity followed by inflicting hurt. And [you should know that] God is self-sufficient [from such charity] and [on such an attitude from you, He would have deprived you; however, besides this] He is also very gracious. Believers! Do not mar your charity by reminders of generosity and by hurting [the recipients] like those who spend their wealth to show off before others and believe neither in God nor in the Last Day. So such men are like a rock covered with soil: a shower falls upon it and leaves it hard and bare. [On the

Day of Judgement], they shall gain nothing from what they earned. And [in reality], God does not guide such ungrateful people ... Would any one of you who has an orchard of dates and grapes underneath which streams of water flow, in which are fruits of all kinds and he grows old and his children are feeble wish that this orchard be blasted by a fiery whirlwind and it burn to ashes? In this manner does God explain to you His revelations so that you may reflect. (2:262-266)

Imām Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī, while explaining these verses, writes:

This is the parable of a person who has planted an orchard of grapes beneath which a canal flows to keep it blossoming. There were other types of fruit also in the orchard and it also produced various crops. The owner of the orchard grew old and all his children were of tender age. Meanwhile a fiery whirlwind passed through the orchard and totally destroyed it. The Qur'ān says that a similar fate will await the charity spending of a person who did not protect it from destructive calamities. The lightning which destroys their residence is hidden right in their own precincts and it will appear exactly at the time when they will not be left with the option of obtaining what they have lost.⁵¹

In the verses of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl under discussion, the Almighty has explained that only people who adopt a balanced attitude in their spending and consider the sustenance they have been given by God a blessing and not a result of their own planning are afforded with the urge and will to spend in this manner. Consequently, two further things are stated.

Firstly, wealth should not be squandered for it is a blessing of God and the right attitude in this regard is that a person should spend it in a balanced and efficient way and whatever he saves, he should consider that he has been entrusted with it as a share for its rightful recipients and with full caution discharge this duty of handing it over to them. The reason for this is that a person who does not adopt a balanced attitude regarding his needs is not able to even find time from his pastimes and pursuits to fulfil such duties. The Qur'ān says that people who squander their wealth are Satan's brothers and Satan is very ungrateful to his Lord. He allures people to his ways and entices them to spend on things which earn the displeasure of God. While explaining the balanced attitude in this matter, the Qur'ān says that a person should neither be miserly nor prodigal so that when he needs his wealth, he ends up yearning for wealth and is reduced to indigence; on the other hand, he should spend in a balanced way and always save something so that he is able to help others whenever needed. The Qur'ānic words used for this are: وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَفْلُولَةً إِلَى عُقْدَكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلُّ الْبِسْطِ فَتَقْعُدْ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا.

Secondly, it is the wisdom and will of God which governs the financial circumstances of a person. He may be blessed in abundance in this regard or he

51. Ibid., vol. 1, 619.

may have to live hand to mouth. The only responsibility of a person is that he should work diligently to create opportunities for his livelihood. People who do not understand this, not only do not spend on others, but many a time become so callous as to even kill their children for fear of poverty. The Qur'ānic verse of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl quoted above which mentions this specially alludes to the evil Arab custom of burying alive infant girls in the time of *jāhiliyyah*. The psyche behind this was that since a woman is not an earning member of the family, why should one bear the burden of her up-bringing. The Qur'ān forbade this heinous practice and said that it is the Almighty who provides for these innocent children and also for those who indulge in this practice. They should rest assured that the Almighty is ever-watching the circumstances His servants are going through; He is not un-aware of them.

At another instance, this aspect is explained thus in the Qur'ān:

الشَّيْطَانُ يَعْدُكُمُ الْفَقْرَ وَيَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْدُكُمْ مَغْفِرَةً مِنْهُ وَفَضْلًا وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلَيْهِ يُؤْتِي
الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا وَمَا يَذَكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُوا الْأَكْبَابِ
(٢٦٩-٢٦٨:٢)

Satan threatens you with poverty and tempts you to [spend on] lewd things and God promises you His forgiveness and His bounty and God is munificent and all-knowing. He [according to His law] gives an awareness of [this promise of] wisdom to whom He pleases, and he who receives this awareness indeed receives a treasure of great good. Yet none but men of sense receive a reminder [from such things]. (2:268-269)

iv. Chastity and Modesty

The fourth directive mentioned is that no one should even go near fornication. The reason stated for this is that it is open lewdness and a very dreadful practice. The implication is that no argument is required to prove its awfulness and lewdness. Human nature has always regarded it to be a grave sin and a terrible crime. It is an indubitable reality that the institution of family is as essential a need for a person as air and water are. This institution can only sustain on natural feelings and emotions if the relationship between the spouses is permanent. If this aspect is missing, then a society can only consist of a herd of cattle which is devoid of natural and spiritual feelings and emotions; it cannot be founded on right footings. Mawlānā Abū al-A'lā Mawdūdī (d. 1979) writes:

The fact that this act is immoral or a religious sin or against social norms is something which has been universally acknowledged in all times and no one save a few people who have surrendered their intellect to base desires or who in their madness invent novel things and then philosophize them has differed in this regard. The reason for this universal consensus is that human nature itself requires that fornication be prohibited. The survival of human race and the establishment of a human society both require that a man and a woman

should not be free to merely sexually gratify themselves and then split away; on the contrary, the relationship between them should be of a permanent contract in which they remain sincere to one another – a relationship which is known and acknowledged in the society and is also given protection by it. Without this, human race cannot survive a single day because a child needs several years of care and affection for his upbringing and a woman single-handedly can never be able to bear this responsibility unless the man who was responsible for bringing the child into existence is ready to support and help her. Similarly, without such a contract, human society also cannot remain intact because society itself has been created through the union of a man and a woman in the form of a family and then through relationships between various families with one another. If a man and a woman, while disregarding a family set-up, come together to merely sexually gratify themselves for sometime, human beings will end up dispersed from one another, the roots of collective life will be severed and the very foundation on which the edifice of the society was built would be razed to ground. For these reasons, an informal relationship between a man and a woman which is not based on a contract of sincerity that is known and recognized in the society is against human nature. Consequently, man has always regarded fornication as a grave folly and an act of great immorality and, in religious terms, an atrocious sin.⁵²

It is this very terrible nature of fornication because of which the Almighty has not merely forbidden it, He has asked us to not even go near it. This means that one should keep away from things that may lead to it or may ultimately entice a person to it. The etiquette of gender interaction mentioned in Sūrah Nūr is stated for these very reasons. A summary of this etiquette is that a man a woman with regard to their physical and psychological needs should guard their gazes and properly cover their private parts and should not do something that rouses sexual emotions. The reason for this is that when Satan wants to give currency to fornication in a society, he first of all begins from these places. It is evident from the Qur’ān that it was through this very way that he had attacked Adam and Eve:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ لَا يَقْتُنُنُكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ كَمَا أَخْرَجَ أَبَوَيْكُمْ مِّنَ الْحَيَّةِ يَتْرِعُ عَنْهُمَا لَبِسَهُمَا سَوْءَاتِهِمَا
إِنَّهُ يَرَكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيلُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْهُمْ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ أُولَئِكَ لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٢٧:٧)

Children of Adam! Let not Satan tempt you again the way he had expelled your parents from the orchard [in which they were living] stripping them of their garments in order to reveal their private parts to them. He and his associates see you from where you cannot see them. Indeed, We have made such devils associates of those who do not profess faith. (7:27)

52. Abū al-A‘lā Mawdūdī, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, 5th ed., vol. 3 (Lahore: Idārah tarjumān al-Qur’ān, 1985), 319.

What sort of an attack is this? Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

... he first strips a person of his apparel of piety and virtue – the apparel which the Almighty had blessed him with together with his real apparel to elevate his inner-self. When this inner apparel is taken off, modesty and chastity, which are the actual motives for the real apparel, fade away. Then this real apparel starts becoming burdensome. Immodesty and profligacy induce a person to expose body parts which hold an attraction for the opposite gender – parts whose concealment is a requirement of human nature. Then comes fashion to support this tendency; it provokes a person to wear clothes in such a bizarre way that he or she appears to be naked in spite of being adorned with clothes, and in this way – concealment of the body – the very objective of clothes is sacrificed. The only thing left in these clothes now is embellishment and the real objective is now to enhance the degree of nudity as much as possible. Then gradually human intellect is overwhelmed and nudity is now dubbed as culture and covering the body is considered to be an old-fashioned act which exudes abhorrence. Then educated ruffians come to the scene and present the philosophy in the light of history that nudity is real human nature. Clothing has become in vogue because of restrictions of customs and etiquette. It is at this stage that shamelessness overcomes people and the whole society is poisoned with lust and licentiousness.⁵³

On this very basis, popularizing fornication and creating opportunities which lead to it are regarded a crime by the Almighty. The Qur’ān says that when the Hypocrites and miscreants of Madīnah in the time of the Prophet (sws) adopted these ways, the Almighty said:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحْبِّونَ أَن تَشْيَعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ
وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (٢٤:١٩)

Indeed those who like shamelessness and lust to spread among Muslims shall be sternly punished in this life and in the life to come. [They deserve only this] and God knows [them], but you know not. (24:19)

For this very objective, the Prophet (sws) forbade Muslim women from putting on pungent perfumes when going out, from sitting alone with men and from travelling alone.⁵⁴ When people asked about the brother-in-law, the Prophet (sws) told them that sitting alone with him is tantamount to death.⁵⁵

The wisdom in the directive of taking a *mahram* relative along in long journeys

53. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 3, 246.

54. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 175, 496, (nos. 1088, 3006); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 187, 566, (nos. 997, 3272); Abū Dā’ud, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 77, (no. 4173).

55. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 935, (no. 5232); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 966, (no. 5674).

is no different.⁵⁶ Turning away one's gaze from ladies after the first sight is also for this purpose.⁵⁷ Certain types of music have been prohibited for the very reason that they may lead a person to this sin.⁵⁸ The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that the children of Adam necessarily get some share from fornication. Thus ogling women is the fornication of the eye, lustful talk is the fornication of the tongue, amusing oneself with such talk is the fornication of the ears, touching and walking for this purpose is the fornication of the hands and the feet. Then the heart and the mind show their yearning and one's private parts sometimes confirm this and sometimes negate it.⁵⁹

All these directives are meant to nip the evil of fornication in its bud.

v. Sanctity of Human Life

The fifth directive is that no one should kill any one. This is a mention of the sanctity of human life which it always has had as per morality and religion. The Qur'ān has informed us that prior to this, the Israelites were also given this directive and the Almighty had ordained that killing one human being is like killing whole mankind. This directive has been preserved in the Talmud in these very words even today.⁶⁰ The Qur'ān has referred to it in Sūrah Mā'idah in the following words:

مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بَعْدِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَانَمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ حَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَانَمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ حَمِيعًا (٣٢:٥)

That was why we laid it down for the Israelites that he who killed a human being without the latter being guilty of killing another or of spreading anarchy in the land should be looked upon as if he killed all mankind, and he who saved one life should be looked upon as if he saved all mankind. (5:32)

It is evident from the above mentioned directive that the life of a human being can only be taken in two circumstances: when a person has killed someone or when a person while rebelling against the collective system goes after the life, wealth or honour of others. The words "spreading anarchy in the land" refer to this latter practice. Apart from these two circumstances, every killing is an unjustified act the punishment of which is eternal Hell according to the Qur'ān (25:68-69). Muslims, who perpetrate this crime against other Muslims, are warned thus by the Qur'ān:

56. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 175, (no. 1086); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 566, (no. 3270).

57. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 961, (no. 5644); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 252, (no. 2149).

58. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 992, (no. 5590).

59. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1087, (no. 6243); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1157, (no. 6754).

60. Jacob Neusner, *The Talmud of Babylonia; An Academic Commentary*, vol. 23 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 183.

وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُّتَعَمِّدًا فَجَرَأَهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا وَلَعْنَهُ وَأَعَدَ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا (٩٣:٤)

And he who intentionally kills a believer, his reward is Hell. He shall abide therein forever, and the wrath and the curse of God are upon him. He has prepared for him a dreadful doom. (4:93)

The Qur'ān has also clarified that the perpetrators of this crime will not only have to face God, they will also have to reckon with the heirs of the slain person and God has given them full authority in this regard, and no court of justice can show any leniency to the murderer without the consent of his heirs. Its responsibility is that if they insist on *qisās*, it should help them and should implement with full force whatever they want.

However, this does not at all mean that if at some place a formal government does not exist and the matter of *qisās* is solely left to the discretion of the heirs of the accused, then they, in their capacity as heirs, should exceed the limits and, for example, slay others besides the slayer in frenzy of revenge or out of prejudice for their status and superiority demand the execution of a free person in place of a slave or a man in place of a woman, or kill the criminal by torturing him, or take out their venom on his dead body or adopt those methods of killing which have been prohibited by the Almighty. The words فَلَا يُسْرِفُ فِي الْقَتْلِ point to this aspect.

It is evident from this that on the Day of Judgement the slain person shall have the same authority and without his consent the slayer will not be granted any leniency.

vi. Misappropriating the Wealth of Orphans

The sixth directive is that the wealth of orphans should not be misappropriated. The words of this directive are the same as those of fornication earlier: "Do not approach the wealth of orphans except for their welfare and betterment." The implication is that one should only use the wealth of the orphans for their development and protection and this too should be done till the time when orphans reach maturity and can be entrusted with their wealth. In Sūrah Nisā', the Almighty has given certain guidelines in this matter; however, since they relate to the *shari'ah*, they shall be mentioned in the chapter "The Social Sharī'ah" of this book. Here, this much should remain clear that in the given verse what one has been prohibited regarding orphans is a grave crime and one should not consider it to be trivial. Consequently, the Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْبَيْتَامَىٰ ظُلْلَمَ إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا وَسَيَصْنَلُونَ سَعِيرًا (٤:١٠)

Indeed, those who devour the property of orphans unjustly, swallow fire into their bellies; and soon shall they be cast into the raging fire of Hell. (4:10)

vii. Keeping Promises

The seventh directive is that promises should be kept at all costs. The Qur'ān here says that one shall be held accountable for promises. In Sūrah Baqarah, this directive has been mentioned with great stress and emphasis in the following words: (وَالْمُؤْفَقُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا (٢:١٧٧)) (and when they make promises, they keep them, (2:177)). Promises here imply all kinds and sorts of promises. Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī says:

... keeping promises includes all small and big obligations whether they are related to God or to His creation, whether they come into existence through written means or whether through some relation and association, whether they are declared or are considered to be understood in a good society. We are tied in some sort of a contract with God and the Prophet (sws), our father and mother, our wife and kids, with our near and distant relatives, our clan and family, our neighbours and neighbourhood, teachers and students, masters and servants and with our peoples and nations. It is an essential requirement of piety and fulfilment of oaths that we fulfil these rights. In other words, the real spirit of keeping promises is fulfilment of rights and fulfilment of rights encompasses all big and small obligations.⁶¹

At some other instances in the Qur'ān (eg. 23:8, 70:32) as well, this directive of keeping promises is mentioned with the same emphasis. At the time of armed *jihād* also, the most important directive which is stated in the Qur'ān is this keeping of promises. Sūrah Tawbah is the *sūrah* of punishment. In it, the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims have been directed to end their treaties with the Idolaters of Arabia and launch the final onslaught. However, this much has been clearly stated in it (9:4) that treaties which are time-bound must be honoured till the time period expires. Similarly, in Sūrah Anfāl, it has been stated that if a nation with whom Muslims are bound in a pact is oppressing the Muslims, then these Muslims cannot be helped in breach of this pact. The Qur'ān says:

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يُهَاجِرُوا مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ وَلَائِتِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ يُهَاجِرُوا وَإِنِ اسْتَنْصَرُوكُمْ فِي
الَّذِينَ فَعَلَيْكُمُ التَّصْرِيرُ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ وَيَنْهَاكُمْ وَيَنْهَاكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ
(٧٢:٨)

And to those who accepted faith but did not migrate [to Madīnah], you owe no duty of protection until they migrate; but if they seek your help in religion, it is your duty to help them except against a people with whom you have a treaty; and [in reality] Allah sees what you do. (8:72)

viii. Honesty in Weighing

The eighth directive is that things should be weighed and measured with honesty. The Almighty says that He has set the earth and the heavens on a scale and thus it is necessary that a person in his circle should remain just and measure

61. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 429.

with the right scale and weights. The Qur'ān says:

وَالسَّمَاء رَفَعْهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ لَا تَصْلُحُوا فِي الْمِيزَانِ وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ
(٥٥ : ٩-٧)

And He raised high the heavens and set the scale of all things that you [also in your circle of authority] do not transgress that scale. Give just weight and full measure. (55:7-9)

It is evident from these verses that this is a very important directive and in its essence is actually a corollary of the scale of justice on which this world has been created. Thus if anyone deviates from it, it means that his conception of justice and fairness has become defective and he actually does not believe in a just God. After this, obviously the economic and social systems of the society are shaken from their bases and no ingredient of the society remains in its place. The people of the Prophet Shu'ayb (sws) were involved in such malpractices. At more than one instance, his advice and sermon to his people in this regard is mentioned in the Qur'ān. At one place, it is said:

أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَلَا تُكْوِنُوا مِنَ الْمُخْسِرِينَ وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ وَلَا تُبْخَسِّرُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءً مِنْهُمْ
وَلَا تَعْنَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ (٢٦ : ١٨٣-١٨١)

Give just measure and defraud none. Weigh with the right scales and do not cheat your fellow men of what is rightly theirs; and do not spread anarchy in the land. (26:181-183)

Adulteration in things is also a similar case. If a person mixes water in milk, or sand in sugar or barley in wheat, he commits the same crime because even if he weighs accurately he is not giving the buyer in full what he is buying. This is like usurping the rights of others for which he will have to face grave consequences both in this world and in that to come. Thus the Qur'ān has said: "give full measure, when you measure, and weigh with correct scales. This is better and fairer as far as the consequences are concerned."

ix. Following Speculations

The ninth directive is that one should not get after things one has no knowledge of. The Qur'ān has warned us that one must not take this directive lightly because the faculties of sight, hearing and intellect shall one day be held accountable before God. The implication of this directive is that it is not right for a Muslim to make bad estimations about other Muslims, or make allegations against others or take some action against others without proper knowledge of what the matter is or spread rumours merely on the basis of speculation or form a view about God's being and attributes and His directives merely on the basis of conjecture and guesswork and unending analogies. In Sūrah Ḥujrāt, some of these things have

been mentioned with this clarity of prohibition:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بَرِئُّهُ مَا يَصِيبُهُمْ وَلَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مَا فَعَلُوا
نَادِمِينَ (٤٩:٦)

Believers! If an evil-doer brings you a piece of news, find out its true status, lest you inflict harm on others unwittingly and then regret your action. (49:6)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَبِرُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظُّنُونِ إِنَّمَا وَلَا تَجْسِسُوا (٤٩:١٢)

Believers! Avoid being overly speculative, for some speculations are a blatant sin and do not spy on one another. (49:12)

(1) Taking Action without Finding out the Truth

The first thing which is mentioned in these verses is that if an evil-doer informs us about something, we should not take action until we have thoroughly found out what the truth of the matter is, for we may take some action in frenzy and rage and later regret what we do.

It is evident from this directive that if the informant is an unknown person or someone about whom it is not known whether he is a good person or an evil one, the truth about him must be ascertained. On this very basis, the *muḥaddithūn* have researched into the life and times of people who narrate the words or deeds of the Prophet (sws) and if they were not able to access the details of a narrator, they rejected his narrative by regarding him to be an unknown person.

(2) Abstaining from Excessive Conjecture

The second thing which is stated here is that one should not indulge in excessive conjecture because certain conjectures are blatant sins. Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, while explaining this, writes:

... it is but natural for good or bad thoughts to arise in one's heart about people whom a person encounters in life. It is these thoughts which establish or sever a person's relationship with another. Viewed thus, it is these thoughts which make and break relationships in a society. On the basis of this importance which thoughts occupy, a person should not carelessly accept or reject them; on the contrary, he should be very sharp and alive to them. In this regard, the guidance provided by Islam to its followers is that a Muslim must always think well of others unless it is proven to him that some person is not worthy of this. Thinking well of a person is an obvious requirement of the brotherhood of faith on which Islam has founded its society and which has been explained earlier. On the other hand, if a person adopts the attitude of entertaining and harbouring all sorts of ill-founded thoughts that come to his mind, then the example of such a person is that of a hunter who becomes so blind in his obsession for catching fish that he also catches snakes. Obviously, there is a great possibility for a person who becomes blind in his obsession for catching fish to end up losing

his own life one day as a result. The Qur'ān has stopped Muslims from this very danger that one must not start conjecturing too much because certain conjectures are blatant sins which may doom a person. The guidance which emerges from this directive is that a person should not become so mentally sick as to think ill of others; on the contrary, he should always think well of others. If the deed or words of a person induce him to think ill of him, he should try as far as he can to make a good justification, if it can be made. He should only think contrarily when he is not able to make any sound justification. It is better to think positively of a person who deserves to be thought of negatively than to think negatively of a person who deserves to be thought of positively.⁶²

(3) Refraining from Inquisitiveness

The third thing which is mentioned is that one should not be nosy and inquisitive about others. Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī writes:

... here the prohibition actually relates to being inquisitive for an evil purpose. In other words, here the intention of a person is to try to find some fault or mistake in the private life of another person and have access to the secrets of his family and family life. Sometimes, the motive of this probing is jealousy for it soothes a person to find out such facts about someone he considers to be his rival. At other times, the motive is hatred and animosity: he wants to humiliate another person by informing others of his faults. This latter tendency has now become a profession to which newspaper journalism has given a great impetus. Some journalists are in perpetual search of scandals and the journalist who is considered to be the most successful is the one who is able to lay his hands on a scandal in the private life of a famous person which makes his newspaper or journal sell like hot cakes. Such spying and probing is counter to mutual sympathy and brotherhood which are the foundations of an Islamic society; for this reason Muslims have been stopped from indulging in them. On the other hand, probing which a Muslim does to find out the circumstances of another person so that he can help him in his difficulties and needs or the spying and probing which an Islamic state does to be fully informed about the circumstances of its citizens, is neither implied here nor is it prohibited. On the contrary, such spying is a very virtuous act on the part of a neighbour so that he is aware of the circumstances and problems which his neighbour is encountering and is able to help him out. Similarly, for a state, this attitude is not just an act of virtue, it is in fact its responsibility to arrange to be informed of the good or bad circumstances of its citizens so that it is able to properly discharge its duties.⁶³

x. Pride and Vanity

The tenth directive is that no one should walk with pride and vanity on God's

62. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 7, 509.

63. Ibid., vol. 7, 510.

earth. It is thus said that howsoever much a person may strike the earth with his feet, he will not be able to rent it asunder and howsoever much a person may walk while raising his head, he will not be able to reach the heights of the mountains. Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī writes:

... the implied meaning is that what is the meaning of showing pride and vanity in the earth made by God – the God whose glory and grandeur one witnesses in the vast expanse of the earth that He has spread out on which one's status is not even that of an ant or an insect and the God who has created these towering mountains before which one's status is not even that of a squirrel. One should try to recognize one's status and always surrender oneself before the majesty and splendour of God.⁶⁴

Such a gait obviously reflects one's inner-self. Wealth, authority, beauty, knowledge, power and other similar things produce pride and vanity in a person. Each of these produces a specific type of pride in one's gait showing that his heart is devoid of the perception of serving God and there is no concept in it of God's glory and greatness. The heart which has the perception of serving God and of His greatness only beats in the chests of people who have humility. Instead of walking arrogantly, they walk with their heads bent. Thus walking with pride and vanity is a very bad trait and its punishment is very grave too. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that the person who has pride even to the measure of a mustard seed will not enter Paradise.⁶⁵ He has also said that honour is the lower fabric of the Almighty and greatness is His upper fabric. He who competes with Him regarding these will be punished.⁶⁶

Here it should remain clear that pride and vanity are not merely reflected in one's gait: they are evident in one's conversation, clothes, appearance and behaviour as well. Consequently, the Qur'ān says:

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَائِكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ وَاقْبَدٍ فِي
مَسِيقٍ وَاغْفُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكِ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمَّارِ (٣١: ١٨-١٩)

And do not become indifferent to people nor walk proudly on the earth: God does not like the arrogant and the one who expresses vanity and be modest in your gait and keep your voice low; indeed, the most hideous of voices is the braying of the ass. (31:18-19)

The Prophet (sws), on this very basis, has prohibited the use of all things which reflect affluence or are a means of show and pomposity or are instrumental in overawing others or belong to the mannerisms of rogues and ruffians. For this very reason, he forbade the use of silk, making covers from expensive hides and eating

64. Ibid., vol. 4, 502.

65. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 54, (nos. 265, 266).

66. Ibid., 1144, (no. 6680).

in utensils made of gold and silver.⁶⁷ So much so, he even urged people having short beards and large moustaches to give up this arrogant appearance and said that one should satisfy one's passion by increasing the length of the beard but moustaches should be trim in all circumstances.⁶⁸ He is reported to have said: "He who wore a dress to show his status, the Almighty will clothe him with the dress of humiliation on the Day of Judgement, and then fire shall be ignited in it."⁶⁹ He is similarly reported to have said: "On the Day of Judgement, God will not wish to see a person who walked conceitedly by dragging his legware."⁷⁰

Moreover, this mental state becomes a source of great sins. Consequently, it is this conceit and arrogance which is instrumental in deliberately denying the truth, in considering oneself superior to others on the basis of colour, creed and race, in considering others to be inferior and making fun of them, in censuring others, in calling them with bad names and in scandalizing the faults of others in their absence. God has strictly forbidden all these.

(1) Evading the Truth

Those who evade the truth and reject it in arrogance are warned that they must not consider their sin to be trivial. Their punishment is that the doors of Paradise are closed for them. Hell shall be their abode from all sides and they shall abide in it forever:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لَا تُفْتَحُ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّىٰ يَلْجَأُوا
إِلَيْنَا مُهَاجِرِينَ وَكَذَّلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُجْرِمِينَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ جَهَنَّمَ مَهَادٌ وَمِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ وَكَذَّلِكَ
نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ (٧: ٤١-٤٠)

Indeed those who denied Our revelations and evaded them in arrogance, the gates of heavens shall not be opened for them and neither shall they be able to enter Paradise except if a camel is able to pass through the eye of a needle. [This is their punishment] and in this manner do We punish the criminals. Hell shall be their bedding and [the flames of] Hell shall be their covering and in this way do We punish the evil-doers. (7:40-41)

(2) Conceit on One's Lineage

People who show conceit and vanity on their lineage and ancestry are cautioned that all human beings are the progeny of Adam and Eve. Whites are

67. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 998, 1029, (nos: 5633, 5635, 5837); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 923, (nos. 5387, 5388).

68. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1036, (no. 5892); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 125, (no. 602). What we have stated above is the correct nature of this counsel from the Prophet (sws); however, people thought that he is giving a directive of lengthening beards and in this way they introduced a thing in religion which has absolutely no connection with it.

69. Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 186, (no. 3607).

70. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1020-1021, (no. 5783); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 933, (no. 5455).

not superior to blacks nor blacks superior to whites and similarly, Arabs are not superior to non-Arabs and non-Arabs are not superior to Arabs. In the sight of God, the status and nobility of a person is not founded on the basis of his family, clan, colour or creed; it is founded on the basis of his consciousness towards God. Only that person will be respected in His presence who is the most God-fearing and lives within the limits specified by Him even if he belongs to a low and unknown family. And he who is arrogant and conceited shall definitely be humiliated even though he belongs to a family of high status and pedigree. This division of mankind in families is merely to give people identity. Just as God has distinguished people from one another on the basis of features, colour and stature so that they can identify and recognize one another, similarly, dividing them into families and clans is meant to serve this very purpose. It has no significance beyond this:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَى وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْفَاقَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ (٤٩:١٣)

You people! We have created you from one man and one woman and divided you into tribes and clans that you might get to know one another. The noblest of you in God's sight is he who is the most God-conscious. Indeed, God is all-knowing and wise. (49:13)

(3) Making Fun of Others

People who make fun of others are told that in the sight of God a person is respectable or disreputable on the bases of his faith and deeds and their true weight too shall be indicated by the Almighty's balance of justice. A person who considers himself to be noble in this world may end up in humiliation on the Day of Judgement, and a person who is considered lowly may be rewarded greatly in Paradise. Hence every Muslim must remain aware that according to the Qur'ān (49:10) once he has entered the folds of faith, he has entered the universal brotherhood of Muslims in which every Muslim is a brother to another. It is not befitting for him at all to make fun of others, ridicule and censure them while thinking them to be inferior to him:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخِرُ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِّنْ نِسَاءٍ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونُنَّ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُنَّ (٤٩:١١)

Believers! Let no man make fun of another man, who may perhaps be better than himself and let no woman make fun of another woman, who may perhaps be better than herself. (49:11)

(4) Defaming and Taunting Others

Those who defame and taunt their brethren are warned to abstain from this practice. The Qur'ānic words used for this in Sūrah Ḥujurāt are

لَلَّمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ

which imply that a person who defames and taunts others actually defames and taunts himself. Moreover, the word used is لَمْ which includes other meanings as finding faults in others, ridiculing and mocking others, blaming others, making someone a target of objections whether openly or in secret. Obviously, in all these things, the motive is considering oneself to be superior and others as inferior and mediocre. A similar misdeed is calling others with bad names. The Arabs of the age of ignorance had a special proclivity for it and they regarded it to be a matter of great accomplishment. The most outstanding poet and orator of a tribe was the one who would excel others in expressing the superiority of his tribe and in speaking ill and demeaning other tribes. Consequently, Muslims were prohibited from indulging in this practice and were told that ridiculing others, demeaning and humiliating them and calling them with bad names is an act of disobedience and after faith, even the name of disobedience is bad. Thus it is not worthy of a Muslim to be involved in any of these evil practices:

وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابِزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْإِيمَانُ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٤٩:١١)

And do not defame one another, nor call one another with bad names. After embracing faith, even the name of disobedience is bad. [Repent from this] and [remember] those who do not repent from this are indeed wrongdoers. (49:11)

(5) Backbiting

People who are guilty of backbiting are chided that it is a heinous sin. In comparison, it is no less than eating the flesh of one's deceased brother. Eating the flesh of the dead in itself is a detestable act, and if that flesh is of one's brother, how can a person like to eat it? A little deliberation shows that also depicted in this description is a picture of his helplessness in self-defence. After presenting this simile, the Qur'ān has posed the question that if a person is not willing to tolerate such a thing then how can he tolerate such a despicable and dreadful practice as backbiting. Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī writes:

... backbiting means speaking about the flaws of a person in his absence. The fact that this is done in his absence incorporates in the very meaning of backbiting the aspect that the targeted person does not get to know of it. In pursuance of keeping it secret, a backbiter gives his statements before people who hold the same opinion and are his confidants sharing the objective with him or at least are people about whom he is sure that they are not the ones who sympathize with the person he is targeting and will not reveal this secret to him.⁷¹

If one analyzes backbiting, one can see that hidden behind it is arrogance and conceit of a person which induces him to humiliate and disgrace others.

71. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 7, 510.

Consequently, the Almighty has forbidden us from it and said that everyone must fear His Lord in this matter:

وَلَا يَعْتَبِرُكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مِيتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ وَأَنْقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
تَوَابُ رَحِيمٌ (٤٩:١٢)

And no one among you should indulge in backbiting others. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? So you would dislike it. [Repent from this practice] and have fear of God. Indeed, God is Ever-Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. (49:12)

Like the Ten Commandments of the Torah, these are the ten commandments of the Qur'ān. All morals are a corollary of these commandments. What the Almighty has regarded as great sins and acts of vulgarity (Qur'ān, 42:37; 53:32) emerge from disobeying these directives. The Qur'ān unequivocally states that people can be punished for this disobedience in the Hereafter. Thus every Muslim should remain cautious about it. The following three things should remain in consideration in this regard.

Firstly, if the disobedience is unintentional, God will not hold a person accountable. His law is that if a person commits a misdeed unintentionally, He will not punish him. While stating a directive about adopted sons, the Qur'ān says:

وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ حُنَاحٌ فِيمَا أَخْطَأْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَكِنَّ مَا تَعْمَدُتُ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا (٣٣:٥)

And the mistake you have made in this matter shall be forgiven, but in what your hearts make an intention shall not be forgiven. God is Ever-Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. (33:5)

Secondly, if a person is able to abstain from disobeying these directives, then its reward is that his minor sins will be forgiven by the Merciful Lord otherwise all his major and minor sins will be recorded in the register of his deeds and he will have to give their account:

إِنَّ رَحْمَةَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى أَكْبَارٌ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفَّرُ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَنُدْخِلُكُمْ مُدْخَلًا كَرِيمًا (٤:٣١)

If you abstain from the major sins of what is being prohibited to you, We shall forgive your minor sins and shall make you enter a place of honour. (4:31)

Thirdly, if a person disobeys any of these directives while being overwhelmed with emotions, he should repent and mend his ways. It is essential that he repent as soon as possible. The Almighty has clearly stated in the Qur'ān that He will forgive people who commit a sin while being overwhelmed with emotions if they repent right after it. He will not forgive people who sin all their lives and repent when they see death approaching. Similarly, He will not forgive people who deliberately reject the truth if they continue with this attitude till their death:

إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُونَ مِنْ قَرِيبٍ فَأُولَئِكَ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ حَكِيمًا وَيَسِّرَ التَّوْبَةَ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدُهُمُ الْمَوْتَ قَالَ
إِنِّي تُبْتُ الآنَ وَلَا الَّذِينَ يَمْوِلُونَ كُفَّارًا أُولَئِكَ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا (٤: ١٧-١٨)

It is incumbent upon God to forgive those who commit a sin while being overwhelmed with emotions and then quickly repent. It is they who are forgiven by God. God is all-knowing and wise. But He will not forgive those who sin all their lives and, when death comes to them, say: "Now I repent!" nor those who die as disbelievers. It is for these that We have prepared a grave punishment. (4:17-18)

In the above verses, the Qur'ān has ascertained two cases in which repentance shall be accepted by the Almighty. After this, one case remains: a person was not able to repent right after his sin; however, he did not delay repentance till his death. In this case, the Qur'ān is silent and in the words of Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, this silence creates hope as well as fear and the purport of the Qur'ān also seems that one should remain between hope and fear in this case. He says that in spite of this what comes to his mind is the fact that such people would hopefully attain salvation through the intercession of the Prophet (sws) because in their case there is no reason for it to be prohibited.

4. Pinnacle of Morality

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ
وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ
وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَحْرَارًا
عَظِيمًا (٣٥: ٣٣)

Men and women who are Muslims, are true believers, serve God diligently, are sincere, patient, humble themselves before God, spend in charity, who fast and guard their private parts and remember God in abundance – on them God will bestow forgiveness and has prepared for them a great reward. (33:35)

When a person reaches the pinnacle of morality with regard to his Creator and his fellow human beings, the qualities which emerge in him are stated in this verse. Thus it ends with the statement that God's mercy awaits these noble souls and He has prepared for them a great reward. In the creed of *taṣawwuf*, the pinnacle of all efforts of a human being is to become an embodiment of divine attributes. If God is all-knowing and all-aware, a person should be no less; if God does not need a wife, he too should spend a life of celibacy; if God is self-sufficient and free of all wants and needs, he also should become free of all human wants and needs; if God

controls the inner and outer worlds of man, he also should be able to walk on water, play with fire, cure the sick by touching them, bring the dead to life and control the mind and soul in whatever way he wants to. However, this is not the view of the Qur'ān. According to it, the pinnacle of a human being is to mould oneself as per the requirements of God's attributes and as a result of this become an embodiment of the qualities stated in the above verse. These are ten qualities and in the whole of its corpus, the Qur'ān has not added to this list. They reflect the pinnacle of religion. It urges its followers to try to engender these qualities in themselves. If there is a level beyond this, then it is that of prophethood and about it, it is well-known that it is not achieved by any effort; it is God-gifted.

Here are the details of these qualities:

i. Islām

The first quality is Islām (showing submission to God). When this word is mentioned with Īmān the way it is here, then it signifies the external form of Islām, ie the directives which relate to the deeds and words and the physical entity of a person. Thus if the tongue of a person is willing to speak and abstain from speaking at the behest of God and His Prophet (sws); if his eyes are keen to see and withdraw at their decree, if his ears are ready to hear and stop hearing at their bidding, if his hands are prepared to strike and restrain themselves at their command and if his feet are keen to walk and stop at their directive, then this is nothing but Islām. The words أَسْلَمْتُ وَحْيِي لِلَّهِ (I submit myself to God, (20:2)) and أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (2:131) (I submit to the God of the worlds, (2:131)) which the prophets of God speak are meant to convey this very reality.

It is evident from the Qur'ān that the best examples of Islām are the prophets themselves. Thus we have been directed to follow them to reach this position of submitting to God and being content and happy with His decisions. The Qur'ān says:

فُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحِبِّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٣١:٣)

Tell them: "If you love God, obey me, God will love you and forgive your sins and [you very well know that] God is Ever-Forgiving and Ever-Merciful." (3:31)

The awareness and vigour with which this obedience should take place is thus explained by Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī:

... a prophet is an embodiment of obedience to God and every action of his is a sign of his cognizance of God. For this reason, those who love God love every action of a prophet. They see that knowledge in a prophet which is the result of his cognizance of God and they witness deeds from him which are produced by this cognizance; similarly, they see in him the habits which please God and they observe in him the attributes which God likes and they perceive in his personality the grandeur which is a reflection of God's

grandeur. Thus they diligently seek every imprint left by a prophet and try to follow it and since they do all this to please God, they are rewarded by Him by becoming His favoured ones.⁷²

ii. Īmān

The second quality is having *īmān* (faith). This is the inner facet of religion and here it implies the full faith one has about the promises of God together with His true cognizance. Thus a person who believes in God in such a manner that he submits himself totally to him and is satisfied over His decisions in the utmost manner, then such a person is called a *mu'min* (true believer). It is through *īmān* that hearts are purified, intellect receives guidance and intentions are cleansed. It is this faith which affects both one's ideologies and one's deeds simultaneously and embraces one's whole being. Then with the remembrance of God, with reciting His revelations and with the manifestation of His signs in the world within a person and that outside, his faith grows. The Qur'ān says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادُهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ (٢:٨)

True believers are those whose hearts are filled with awe at the mention of God, and whose faith grows stronger as they listen to His revelations and who trust in God alone. (8:2)

The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that he gained sweetness of faith who was pleased to accept God as Lord, Islam as religion and Muhammad as prophet.⁷³ The Qur'ān has compared faith to a tree whose roots are deep in the soil and branches spread in the vastness of the sky:

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةً طَيِّبَةً أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ثُوْتِي
أَكْلُهَا كُلُّ حِينٍ يَأْذِنُ رَبِّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ (١٤ : ٢٤ - ٢٥)

Have you not reflected how God has mentioned the example of the word of purity? Its example is like that of a pure tree whose roots are deep in the earth and branches are spread in the sky; it yields its fruit in every season by the directive of God. [This is a parable of the pure word] and God mentions such parables to men so that they may take heed. (14:24-25)

While explaining these verses, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī has written:

In the verse, the expression “word of purity” obviously refers to the “word of faith”. It is compared by the Almighty to a fruit-laden tree whose roots are

72. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tazkiyah-i nafs*, 117.

73. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīh*, 38, (no. 151).

firmly implanted in the soil and whose branches are nicely spread in the sky and it is bearing fruit in every season with the blessing of its Lord. Its roots being deeply implanted in the soil refers to the fact that faith is deeply and firmly implanted in human nature and that it is not like a plant which has sprouted from dung which has no root and a slight calamity can uproot it like the word of disbelief about which the Qur'ān has used the words إِجْتَثَتْ مِنْ فُوقَ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِنْ قَرَارٍ (which can be uprooted from the very surface of the earth; it has no stability, (14:26)). On the other hand, like a strong tree it has firm and deeply set roots so that even if a storm passes upon it, it is not disturbed by the slightest. The verse goes on to describe that it is lavishly fruit-laden and that it is not like a barren tree which neither provides anyone with shade nor with fruit. Its spaciously spread branches in the sky provide shade to caravans and in every season obtain sustenance and nourishment from its fruit. This obviously refers to the blessings and benefits which a believer bestows on his own life and through it on others who in some way come in his contact. These blessings and benefits by nature are both ideological as well as practical. They bear witness to a person's faith and through it a person becomes dear to God and attains His nearness.⁷⁴

It is this faith whose aforementioned requirement is mentioned in the Qur'ān that nothing in this world should be dearer to a true believer than faith. The Qur'ān says:

قُلْ إِنَّ كَانَ آباؤُكُمْ وَأَنْتَنَا أُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَاتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالًا افْتَرَقْتُمُوهَا وَتِحَارَةً
تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِنَ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَصُوا
حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ (٢٤:٩)

[O Prophet!] Tell them: "If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your tribes, the wealth you have acquired, the merchandise you fear may not be sold, and the homes you like, are dearer to you than God, His Prophet and the struggle for His cause, then wait until God makes His Judgement and [remember that] God does not guide such people who break their promises." (9:24)

The Prophet (sws) has explained this reality in various ways. He has said that no one can be a true believer unless he loves the Prophet (sws) more than his children, parents and relatives.⁷⁵ At another instance, he has remarked that it is this love with God and the Prophet (sws) after which a person can be aware of the real taste of faith.⁷⁶

74. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tazkiyah-i nafs*, 325.

75. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 6, (no. 15); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 41, (no. 169).

76. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 6-7, (nos. 16, 21); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 40, (no. 165).

But what is the nature of this love? Since there are a lot of misconceptions about it and people have gone to the two extremes in this regard, it is appropriate that one understands it. Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī writes:

... it does not merely imply the passionate love one naturally has for one's wife, children and other relatives, but it also refers to the love on the basis of intellect and principles for some viewpoint and stance. It is because of this love that a person, in every sphere of life, gives priority to this viewpoint and principle. For it, he sacrifices everything – every directive and desire and every other viewpoint and principle but never sacrifices this for anything of the world. To uphold this viewpoint and principle, he holds every other thing as inferior and subservient but in no way puts up with seeing it inferior and subservient. If his own desires oppose this viewpoint, he fights with them. So much so, if the demands of his wife, children and relatives clash with the demands of this viewpoint, he adheres to it and without any hesitation turns down the desires of his wife and children and the demands of his family and clan.⁷⁷

This is the essence of Īmān and Islām which has come out from the tongue of the Prophet (sws) in the form of a sublime prayer:

أَللّٰهُمَّ أَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِي إِلَيْكَ وَفَوَّضْتُ أَمْرِي إِلَيْكَ وَأَجْهَاتُ ظَاهِرِي إِلَيْكَ رَغْبَةً وَرَهْبَةً إِلَيْكَ لَا
مَلْجَأً وَلَا مَنْجَى مِنْكَ إِلَّا إِلَيْكَ أَللّٰهُمَّ آمَنْتُ بِكِتَابِكَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلْتَ وَبِنَبِيِّكَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلْتَ

O God! I have resigned myself to You and I have consigned my matter to you and have taken support from You fearing Your grandeur and moving towards You in anticipation. There is no refuge and shelter after running away from You, and if there is, it is with You. Lord! I have professed faith in your Book which You have revealed and have professed faith in the Prophet you have sent as a Messenger.⁷⁸

iii. Humbling Oneself before God

The third quality is humbling oneself before God. This is an inner expression of a person which sets a person at the obedience of his Lord with full sincerity and dedication. This is the most prominent manifestation of the relationship between the Lord and His worshippers in the inner-self of a believer. These are people who always serve God and in no circumstances become rebellious against their Lord. Sorrow, happiness, vivacity, exuberance and moments of bliss or grief do not swerve them from their obedience. Even sexual impulses, strong desires and onslaughts of emotions do not make them stumble before their Lord. Their hearts acknowledge His grandeur and greatness and they consider the *sharī'ah* a set of divine directives given by God to them in His very presence and can't even think of evading what is given in this manner. A little deliberation shows that this is the

77. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tazkiyah-i nafs*, 119.

78. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 45, (no. 247).

very state of this entire universe and all its creation:

أَوْ لَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ يَقْبَلُ ظِلَالَهُ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَالشَّمَائِلِ سُجَّدًا لِلَّهِ وَهُمْ دَاخِرُونَ وَلِلَّهِ يَسْجُدُ
مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ دَآبَةٍ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَهُنْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ
مَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٦ : ٤٨ - ٥٠)

And do they not see how every object God created casts its shadow right and left, prostrating itself before God in all humility? Before God prostrate all the living beings of the heavens and the earth and the angels and are never rebellious towards their Lord; they fear their Lord who is above them and do exactly as they are directed. (16:48-50)

iv. Veracity

The fourth quality is veracity. It means that a person's intention, words and deeds are upright and in harmony with one another. A person should not utter a single word which is untrue, his deeds should not contradict his words and if he adheres to every word he gives, then this is the veracity of his words and deeds; however, this should necessarily be supplemented with the veracity of his intentions. The Qur'ān has termed it as *ikhlāṣ* (sincerity) and its antithesis as hypocrisy and at various places clarified that to God the real deeds are those which spring forth from within a person; thus the pinnacle of veracity is achieved through this harmony of words and deeds and intention. The Qur'ānic words (٣٣ : ٢٣) صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ (those who made a promise with God and then fulfilled it, (33:23)) point to this very aspect; ie. truth and veracity should manifest themselves in the words uttered by the tongue, by the intention of the heart and by every deed done. The Qur'ān says:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَأُوا وَجَاهُدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ (٤٩ : ١٥)

True believers are those who professed faith in God and His Messenger and then never remained in any doubt and fought with their wealth and with their persons in the cause of God. Such are those who are veracious. (49:15)

v. Patience

The fifth quality is patience. It means to restrain oneself from restlessness and anxiety. In the verse, (٤٩ : ٥) وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ صَرَرُوا حَتَّىٰ تَخْرُجَ إِلَيْهِمْ (and if they had been patient until you came out, (49:5)), it is used in this initial meaning. Then the meaning of showing perseverance and resolve while encountering hardships and hindrances was incorporated into it. Thus the patience which is mentioned in the verse is not something akin to weakness and frailty that a person is forced to adopt when he is helpless and weak; on the contrary, it is the fountainhead of determination and resolve and the pinnacle of human character. It is because of patience that a person becomes internally strong and instead of complaining about the dreadful

experiences of life, welcomes them accepting them whole-heartedly and considers them to be from God. Viewed thus, a patient person is one who diligently adheres to his stance while fighting greed and fear and is fully content and happy with the decisions of His Lord.

The Qur'ān has mentioned three instances when it is required: poverty, disease and war. A little deliberation shows that the fountainhead for all calamities and hardships are these three things. The Qur'ān says:

وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبُلْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَاءِ وَحِينَ الْبُلْسِ (٢:١٧٧)

And those who are patient in adversity, illness and in times of war. (2:177)

A special linguistic style in Arabic is employed here in this verse to praise the trait of patience showing how extra-ordinarily significant it is in the character of a person. A further explanation of this word can be seen from the way it is used in the Qur'ān:

When the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) began his preaching endeavour, he was directed to adhere to his task with full diligence, disregarding the animosity and hostility of the enemy until the judgement of God arrived. He had to wait for this judgement and not take any action before it. The Qur'ān has used the word “patience” to convey this whole meaning:

وَاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوحَى إِلَيْكَ وَاصْبِرْ حَتَّىٰ يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ (١٠٩:١٠)

And follow what is revealed to you, and wait patiently till God delivers His Judgement, and He is the best of judges. (10:109)

The Prophet Job (sws) faced tremendous hardships and suffering; however, he never complained and was fully content with what was ordained for him. When the Almighty praised him for this behaviour, this very trait of “patience” was used for him:

إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نَعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ (٤٤:٣٨)

We found him patient; the best of men, someone who always turned to God. (38:44)

The Qur'ān has mentioned the words of wisdom Luqmān communicated to his son. He told him to face the hardships encountered in the cause of God like a man:

وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَنْهِ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ (١٧:٣١)

And enjoin virtue and forbid evil. Endure with patience any difficulty you encounter. No doubt, doing this is an act of forbearance. (31:17)

One of the important directives given to people who take up the task of

preaching is that if their addressees resort to oppression and harming them, then, while ignoring these excesses, they should respond in a virtuous manner. This of course is no ordinary thing. The toleration, forbearance and forgiveness required for this is also denoted by the word “patience” in the Qur’ān:

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلُهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا
ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهَتَّدِينَ وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَئِنْ صَرَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ
لِّلصَّابِرِينَ (١٢٥ : ١٢٦)

Call men to the path of your Lord with wisdom and kindly exhortation and debate with them in the most befitting manner. Indeed, your Lord best knows those who stray from His path and those who are rightly guided. And if you avenge, let this be commensurate with the wrong that has been inflicted upon you. And if you exercise patience, then this is the best way for the patient. (16:125-126)

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مَّمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَقَالَ إِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَلَا تَسْتُوِي الْحَسَنَةُ
وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا أَحْسَنَ الَّذِي يَبْتَلِكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاؤَ كَانَهُ وَلِيٌ حَمِيمٌ وَمَا يُلَقَّاهَا إِلَّا
الَّذِينَ صَرَرُوا وَمَا يُلَقَّاهَا إِلَّا ذُو حَظٍ عَظِيمٍ (٤١ : ٣٣ - ٣٥)

And who speaks better than he who calls men towards God, does good deeds and says: “I am a Muslim?” And [in reality] good and evil are not equal. Requite evil with good, and you will see that he who is your enemy will become your dearest friend. And [remember that] none will attain this wisdom except those who are patient and only those who are truly fortunate. (41:33-35)

It is this very word which is used for people who gallantly and resolutely fight the enemy in the battlefield when death stares them in the eyes and fear and dread tries to overwhelm them:

فَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتَيْنِ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أَلْفٌ يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفَيْنِ يَأْذِنِ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ
الصَّابِرِينَ (٨ : ٦٦)

But if there are a hundred patient men among you, they will subdue two hundred, and if a thousand, they will subdue two thousand, with the permission of God and [in reality], God is with those who are patient. (8:66)

This word is also used for a person who keeps resolutely discharging throughout his life all the responsibilities and obligations which the Almighty has imposed upon him. In the words of Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, the way a farmer tills the soil, sows seeds in his fields, waters and constantly looks after them, a person endowed with this trait tills the soil of his personality and protects it, then such an attitude is also called “patience”:

رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنُهُمَا فَاعْبُدُهُ وَاصْطَبِرْ لِعَبَادَتِهِ (٦٥:١٩)

He is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. Worship Him, then, and with patience remain in His service. (19:65)

If on occasions of sorrow and happiness which every person encounters in his life, a person exercises self-control, happiness and joy do not make him proud and arrogant and sorrow does not frustrate and upset him, then such an attitude is also called “patience” by the Qur’ān:

وَلَئِنْ أَذْقَنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَ رَحْمَةِ ثُمَّ نَزَّعْنَاهَا مِنْهُ إِنَّهُ لَيَتُوْسُ كُفُورُ وَلَئِنْ أَذْفَنَاهُ نَعْمَاءَ بَعْدَ ضَرَّاءَ مَسْتَهُ لَيَقُولُنَّ ذَهَبَ السَّيِّئَاتُ عَنِّي إِنَّهُ لَفَرَحٌ فَخُورٌ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ (١١-٩: ١١)

If We show Our mercy to man and then deprive him of it, he becomes frustrated and becomes ungrateful. And if after adversity We grant him favours, he says: “Gone are my hardships,” and grows jubilant and boastful. Not so the patient who do good deeds. Forgiveness is for them and a great reward also. (11:9-11)

It is evident from the foregoing references that patience in the Qur’ān is not the name of forgiving someone out of compulsion or being silent because of helplessness; it is the name of a trait on account of which a person is always content on the decisions of his God, never worried if his efforts are not bearing fruit, is not restless and uneasy, is not revengeful even against those who harm him, is steadfast in defending the truth even if death stares at him, exercises restraint both in times of joy and sorrow and all his life diligently discharges what he thinks to be his obligation.

It is this aspect of human character because of which the relationship of *tawakkul* (trust) is established between him and his creator and, in all circumstances, he trusts Him. The Qur’ānic words (٢: ١٥٦) express this very trust and submission. The Qur’ān says that those who abide by these words all their life will be rewarded with special favours from their Lord:

وَبَشِّرُ الصَّابِرِينَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَواتٌ مِّنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهَتَّلُونَ (٢: ١٥٥-١٥٧)

And [O Prophet!] Give glad tidings [of success in this world and in that to come] to those who persevere [in this cause]. [Those] who when afflicted with some calamity say: “We belong to God, and to Him [one day] we shall return.” On such men will be God’s blessings and mercy and it is they who will be rightly guided [by Him]. (2:155-157)

vi. Khushū‘ (Humility)

The sixth quality is *khushū‘*. The humility and servility which is engendered in a person as a result of comprehending the awe, grandeur and majesty of God is called *khushū‘* by the Qur’ān. This is an internal feeling of a person which makes him submit himself before God and also produces in him the feelings of mercy and love for other human beings.

In the first case, its best manifestation is the prayer, especially the *tahajjud* prayer when a believer communicates with the Almighty while being cut off from the world, and nothing except the remembrance of God fills his secluded moments. At other instances, words such as (٣:١٧) (those who seek forgiveness in the later part of the night, (3:17)) and (٢٥:٦٤) (وَالَّذِينَ يَبْتَلُونَ لَرَبِّهِمْ سَاجِدًا وَكَيْمًا (those who spend their nights while standing and prostrating before their Lord, (25:64)) express this. By placing *khushū‘* immediately before charity and the fast, the Almighty through this arrangement has referred to this very aspect and called the prayer by its essence. As referred to earlier, in the *tahajjud* prayer, this essence manifests the most. It is evident from various indications of the Qur’ān and from the guidance of the Prophet (sws) that in this time a person is in the presence of his Lord, and it is a time cherished by people who love God. Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī says:

... the calm and peace at the time of *tahajjud* stands unrivalled in the twenty four hours of a day. Peace and tranquillity reign supreme from the earth to the heavens above. Everyone is asleep at this time. Perhaps, even Satan is sleeping. Only the Almighty, who never sleeps, is awake or he is awake who is among the most fortunate. If one stands up in the shade of the stars, one will, in reality, feel that the doors of the heavens are open; one will hear a proclamation of mercy and acceptance of repentance. The aura and ambience of this time is so manifest that both the pious and the profane, the righteous and the sinful are aware of them. Those who sleep at this time think that it is the best time for sleep, and those who are awake at this time think that it is the best time for being awake. In reality, both are correct in their contentions. The time which is the most cherished for sleeping is precisely the one which is the most cherished for being awake. Real sacrifice is the sacrifice of what is cherished. Consequently, for this very reason, the Almighty has fixed this time for the prayer of His near ones. For those who leave the comfort of their beds at this time, the Almighty Himself descends to the nearest heaven to hear their prayers and wishes and proclaims: “Is there any person who repents at this time that I may forgive him? Is there anyone who seeks My mercy that I may enshroud him in My mercy?”⁷⁹

In the second case, this feeling effects the whole personality of a believer and makes him an embodiment of affection for his family and very caring and

79. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tazkiyah-i nafs*, 243.

sympathetic towards his friends, relatives and acquaintances and a fountainhead of guidance for the society. Consequently, it is because of such kind, humane and benevolent people that comes into being a society which is a paradise of God on earth and the objective and desire of every upright person. While mentioning the attributes of such noble souls, the Qur'ān says:

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْسُحُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هُوُنَا وَإِذَا حَاطَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا وَالَّذِينَ يَبِيُّونَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَقِياماً وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اصْرِفْ عَنَّا عَذَابَ جَهَنَّمَ إِنْ عَذَابَهَا كَانَ غَرَامًا إِنَّهَا سَاعَةٌ مُسْتَقْرَأً وَمُقَامًا ... وَإِذَا مَرُوا بِاللَّعْنِ مَرُوا كَرَامًا (٢٥: ٦٣-٧٢)

And true servants of the Merciful are those who walk humbly on the earth and if the ignorant argue with them, they say: "Peace be to you!" and leave their way and those who spend their nights standing and prostrating before their Lord and pray: "Lord, ward off from us the punishment of Hell, for its punishment is ever-clinging," it is an evil dwelling and an evil abode ... and who maintain their dignity when they pass by anything which is immoral. (25:63-72)

vii. Charity

The seventh quality is being charitable. One level of spending in the way of God is that one should pay the obligatory *zakāh* from his wealth. A higher level is that he considers whatever wealth remains with him after spending on his personal and business needs to be the right of the society and whenever he sees someone in need, he whole-heartedly helps him. Perhaps the highest level in this regard is that he fulfils the needs of others while sacrificing his own needs and ignoring his own desires. The Qur'ān refers to this attitude by the words: وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَى أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَاصَّة (٩: ٥٩) (those who, in spite of being needy, give preference to the needs of others, (59:9)). The words of the verse under discussion "those who give in charity" can be used for all these three levels of people. However, when enumerating the qualities of a person, he is called a *mutasaddiq* (as is in the verse under discussion), it would primarily refer to the highest level mentioned above. In other words, this quality in a person means that he is a generous and large-hearted person who is always on the look out to spend in the way of God. This actually is a manifestation of the previously mentioned *khushū'* – this time in relation to human beings. It was for this reason that the prayer and spending in the way of God are generally mentioned adjacently in the Qur'ān.

viii. The Fast

The eighth quality is keeping the fast. It specifically targets disciplining the soul and nurturing patience. The Qur'ān says that its objective is to achieve piety (*taqwā*). Thus *al-sā'imīn* (those who fast) are people who have such a strong desire to become pious that they often keep fasting to attain it. It follows from this that these people are the ones who abstain from evil, desist from vulgarity and their life is an embodiment of the highest of morals.

ix. Guarding the Private Parts

The ninth quality is guarding the private parts. This is a consequence of disciplining the soul and of piety. This expression which refers to people who refrain from nudity, lewdness and vulgarity also occurs in some other verses of the Qur'ān. The implication is that they guard their chastity and modesty to the utmost. Thus except at instances they are allowed to reveal themselves, they never do so whether in private or in public. They also do not wear clothes which reveal body parts which have sexual attraction in any manner for the opposite gender. It is this extent of abstaining from vulgarity that produces the society in which chastity reigns supreme and men and women instead of trying to reveal their bodies are anxious to conceal them as much as they can.

x. Remembering God in Abundance

The tenth quality is remembering God in abundance. When the thought of his Lord takes firm ground in the heart of a person, he does not consider it enough to merely worship his God at the specified times of the day. When he sees a sign of God, his tongue spontaneously utters the words *سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ* (glory be to Allah). He begins all his tasks and routines by saying *بِسْمِ اللَّهِ* (in the name of Allah). When he receives a favour from his Lord, he expresses his gratitude by the words *الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ* (gratitude is for Allah). He never expresses his intention for something without uttering the words *إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ* (if Allah wills) and *مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ* (what Allah wills). He seeks God's help in all his affairs. He asks Him for His mercy on every calamity that befalls him. He turns to him in every hardship. He remembers God before going to sleep and begins his day by taking His name. In short, at all instances and at all moments, he is constantly in contact with his Lord. Not only this; when he prays, he remembers God; when he fasts, he remembers God; when he recites the Qur'ān, he remembers God, when he spends on the poor, he remembers God; when he abstains from sin, he remembers God; when he falls in sin, he remembers God and becomes anxious to seek forgiveness from Him.

One form of this remembrance is reflection: when we look at the world created by God, we see an astounding variety in the countless creatures He has created; we see the astounding products of human intellect around us; we see stormy seas and flowing rivers, lush green vegetation, abundant rain and the sequence of days and nights. We witness the outcome of winds and clouds. We also see how the heavens and the earth have been made and the astonishing way in which they are built; their benefits and uses for us are also apparent to us; they have a purpose and meaning to them; then we have the signs of God that are found not only in the world around us but also in the world within us; every now and then these signs appear in new and more enchanting forms. When a believer reflects on these signs of God, his heart and mind are filled with the remembrance of God. Consequently, he spontaneously declares: God! You have not made this world without a purpose; it is against Your knowledge and stature to do something meaningless and purposeless; I know this world will definitely culminate in a day of judgement in which people would be punished who spent their lives thinking

that the world had been created by a merry-maker for merry making; I seek refuge with you from their fate:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْخَلَافِ اللَّيلِ وَالنَّهَارَ لِآيَاتٍ لَّا يُؤْلِي الْأَلْبَابَ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قَيْمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَنْفَكِرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبِّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ (٣: ١٩١-١٩٠)

In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are many signs for men of understanding; those who remember God while standing, sitting, and lying down, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth. [Their prayer is:] “Lord, You have not created this without a purpose. Glory be to You for you do not do anything in vain! So save us from the punishment of the Fire.” (3:190-191)

There are many such supplications which have been reported from the Prophet (sws). After the prayer, rehearsing these supplications is the best way to remember God. We are fortunate enough to have a treasure trove of these prophetic supplications preserved with us in almost their original words. Their grandeur, subtlety and meaningfulness is no less than a miracle of language. There is little chance that there be a better collection of supplications which can be presented to the Lord. If a person has the proclivity to remember God, he should try to make use of these supplications as best as he can.

Some selected supplications of the Prophet (sws) are presented below:

1.

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

Glory be to God; gratitude is for God only; there is no god except God; He is the greatest.⁸⁰

The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that this prayer is the dearest to him than all things on which the sun rises.

2.

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ

Glory be to God and He possesses all worthy attributes.⁸¹

The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that the sins of a person who says

80. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1172, (no. 6847).

81. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1112, (no. 6405); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1171, (no. 6843).

these words a hundred times are forgiven even if they are as much as the foam of the seas.⁸²

3.

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ

Glory be to God, and He possesses all worthy attributes. Glory be to God, the Mighty.⁸³

The Prophet (sws) has said that these two words are very light for the tongue but heavy in the balance and very dear to God.

4.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

There is no god but God; He is alone; No one is His partner; To Him belongs the Kingdom and praise is for Him only and He has power over all things.⁸⁴

The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that he who uttered these words a hundred times a day, his reward will be equivalent to the reward of liberating ten slaves; moreover, hundred virtuous deeds are added to his account and a hundred of his sins are forgiven, and he is protected from Satan all day long.⁸⁵

5.

لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

Power and strength are all from God.⁸⁶

The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that this prayer is a treasure from among the treasures of Paradise.

6.

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ رَبِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ خَلَقْتَنِي وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ وَأَنَا عَلَى عَهْدِكَ وَوَعْدِكَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ أَعُوذُ بِكَ

82. This refers to sins which do not relate to the rights of human beings or for which repentance, making amends or atonement is not necessary.

83. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1154, (no. 6682); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1172, (no. 6846).

84. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 548, (no. 3293); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1171, (no. 6842).

85. These sins are the ones referred to earlier.

86. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 713, (no. 4202); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1174-1175, (no. 6862).

مِنْ شَرٍّ مَا صَنَعْتُ أَبُوءُ لَكَ بِنَعْمَتِكَ عَلَيَّ وَأَبُوءُ بِذَنبِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي إِنَّهُ لَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O God You are my Lord! There is no god except You. You have created me and I am Your servant and am abiding by my promise and pledge to You to the best of my capacity. I seek refuge with You from the evil of my deeds; I acknowledge Your favours upon me and I confess my sins; forgive me because there is none except You who forgives.⁸⁷

The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that if a person utters this supplication with full resolve and dies the same day before evening sets, he shall be granted Paradise and if he utters this supplication at night and dies before dawn, he also shall be granted Paradise.

7.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَحْيَانَا بَعْدَ مَا أَمَاتَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ الشُّتُّورُ

Gratitude is for God alone who gave us life after death and one day towards Him shall be the return.⁸⁸

8.

أَمْسَيْنَا وَأَمْسَى الْمُلْكُ لَلَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لَلَّهِ لَإِلَهٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ خَيْرِ هَذِهِ الْلَّيْلَةِ وَخَيْرِ مَا فِيهَا وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّهَا وَشَرِّ مَا فِيهَا اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ الْكَسَلِ وَالْهَرَمِ وَسُوءِ الْكِبَرِ وَفِتْنَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَوَعَذَابِ الْقُبْرِ

We entered into the evening and God's kingdom also entered into the evening. Gratitude is for God and there is no god except God. He is alone and there is no god but He. To Him belongs the kingdom and praise is for Him only and He has power over all things. O God! I seek this night's goodness and the goodness of what is in it; and I seek refuge with you from the evil of the night and the evil of what is in it. O God! I seek refuge with You from laziness, from old age, from the evil of old age, from the trials of the world and from the torment of the graves.⁸⁹

9.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِي إِلَيْكَ وَفَوَضْتُ أَمْرِي إِلَيْكَ وَالْحَاجَاتُ ظَهَرِي إِلَيْكَ رَغْبَةً وَرَهْبَةً إِلَيْكَ لَا مَلْجَأَ وَلَا مَنْحَا مِنْكَ إِلَّا إِلَيْكَ آمَنْتُ بِكَتَابِكَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلْتَ وَبِنَبِيِّكَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلْتَ

87. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīh*, 1097, (no. 6306).

88. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīh*, 1098, (no. 6312); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīh*, (no. 6887).

89. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīh*, 1178, (no. 6909).

O God! I have tendered myself to You and submitted my affairs to You and rested my back against You while fearing your might and while moving towards you with fondness. There is no refuge and resting place after running away from You, and if ever there is, then it is with You. I professed faith in the book that You have revealed and professed faith in the Prophet whom You have sent as a Messenger.⁹⁰

The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that he who uttered this supplication while going to bed and then died that very night, then he died on Islam.

10.

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَرَبَّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاقْلَقْ الْحَبَّ وَالنَّوْيَ مُنْزَلُ التَّسْوِيرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ
وَالْقُرْآنَ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ كُلِّ ذِي شَرٍّ أَنْتَ أَحَدُ بَنَاصِيَتِهِ أَنْتَ الْأَوَّلُ فَلَيْسَ قَبْلَكَ شَيْءٌ وَأَنْتَ
الْآخِرُ فَلَيْسَ بَعْدَكَ شَيْءٌ وَأَنْتَ الظَّاهِرُ فَلَيْسَ فِوْقَكَ شَيْءٌ وَأَنْتَ الْبَاطِنُ فَلَيْسَ دُونَكَ شَيْءٌ زَادَ
وَهَبْ فِي حَدِيثِهِ اقْضِ عَيْنَ الدَّيْنِ وَأَغْنِنِي مِنْ الْفَقْرِ

O God! The Lord of the heavens and the earth and Lord of everything. O He Who tears apart a grain and a fruit-stone Who has revealed the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'ān! I seek refuge with you from all the evil of evil things whose forehead is in Your hands; You are the foremost, nothing is before You and You are the last and nothing is after You. You are the apparent, nothing is above You and You are the hidden and nothing is below You. Please pay my debts and make me affluent by doing away with my poverty.⁹¹

11.

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ وَإِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُونَ اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَسْأَلُكَ فِي سَفَرِنَا
هَذَا الْبَرِّ وَالْتَّقُوَى وَمِنَ الْعَمَلِ مَا تَرْضَى اللَّهُمَّ هَوَنَ عَلَيْنَا سَفَرُنَا هَذَا وَاطْمُو عَنَّا بَعْدَهُ اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ
الصَّاحِبُ فِي السَّفَرِ وَالْخَلِيفَةُ فِي الْأَهْلِ اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ وَعْثَاءِ السَّفَرِ وَكَابَةِ الْمَنْظَرِ وَسُوءِ
الْمُنْقَلَبِ فِي الْمَالِ وَالْأَهْلِ

Glory be to He Who has made this transport subservient to us otherwise we would not have been able to make it subservient to us, and in reality we are to return to our Lord. O God! We ask from You piety and virtue in this journey of ours and ask from You [to make us do] a deed which pleases You. O God! Make this journey comfortable for us and shorten its length. O God! You are the companion in this journey and the guardian for the family left behind. O

90. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 45, (no. 247); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1177-1178, (no. 6882).

91. Abū Dā‘ud, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 314, (no. 5051).

God! I seek refuge with You from the hardships of this journey and from any evil sight that I may see and from any evil which may await me when I return to my family and my wealth.⁹²

The Prophet (sws) would generally begin his journey with this supplication.

12.

اللَّهُمَّ رَحْمَتَكَ أَرْجُو فَلَا تَكْنِي إِلَى نَفْسِي طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي شَأْنِي كُلُّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O God! I am hopeful of Your mercy. Please do not consign me to my base desires for even a moment and reform all my affairs. Lord! There is no god except You.⁹³

13.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنِ الْهَمِّ وَالْحَزَنِ وَالْعَجْزِ وَالْكَسَلِ وَالْبَخْلِ وَالْجُنُونِ وَضَلَالِ الدِّينِ وَغَلَبةِ الرِّجَالِ

O God! I seek Your refuge from sorrow, distress, meekness, laziness, cowardice, stinginess and from the burden of debt and from the dominance of people.⁹⁴

14.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ الْكَسَلِ وَالْهَمَّ وَالْمَعْرَمِ وَالْمَائِمِ اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَفِتْنَةِ النَّارِ وَفِتْنَةِ الْقَبْرِ وَعَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ وَشَرِّ فِتْنَةِ الْفَقَرِ وَمِنْ شَرِّ فِتْنَةِ الْمَسِيحِ الدَّجَّالِ اللَّهُمَّ اغْسِلْ خَطَايَايَ بِمَاءِ الثَّلْجِ وَالْبَرَدِ وَنَقْ قَلْبِي مِنْ الْخَطَايَا كَمَا يُنْقَى الشَّوْبُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنْ الدَّنَسِ وَبَاعِدْ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ خَطَايَايَ كَمَا بَاعَدْتَ بَيْنَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ

O God! I seek refuge with You from laziness, old age, penalties and sins. O God! I seek refuge with You from the torment of the Fire and the trial of the Fire and the trial of the grave and torment of the grave and the trial of wealth and the trial of poverty and from the trial of the great deceiver who will pose himself to be Jesus (sws). O Lord! Wash my sins with water and snow and hail and cleanse my heart of sins the way a white cloth is cleansed of dirt and distance me from my sins the way you have distanced the east and the west from one another.⁹⁵

92. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 566-567, (no. 3275).

93. Abū Dā’ud, *Sunan*, vol. 4. 326, (no. 5090).

94. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1106, (no. 6369).

95. Ibid., 1107, (no. 6375).

15.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ وَمِنْ قَلْبٍ لَا يَخْشَعُ وَمِنْ نَفْسٍ لَا تَشْيُعُ وَمِنْ دَعْوَةٍ لَا يُسْتَحْاجَبُ لَهَا

O God! I seek refuge with You from knowledge which is not beneficial, from the heart which is bereft of humility, from the soul which is never quenched and from the prayer which is never accepted.⁹⁶

16.

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي خَطَيْتِي وَجَهْلِي وَإِسْرَافِي فِي أُمْرِي وَمَا أَنْتَ أَعْلَمُ بِهِ مِنِّي اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي جَدِّي وَهَزْلِي وَخَطَائِي وَعَمْدِي وَكُلَّ ذَلِكَ عِنْدِي اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي مَا قَدَّمْتُ وَمَا أَخْرَجْتُ وَمَا أَسْرَرْتُ وَمَا أَعْلَمْتُ وَمَا أَنْتَ أَعْلَمُ بِهِ مِنِّي أَنْتَ الْمُقْدَّمُ وَأَنْتَ الْمُؤَخِّرُ وَأَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

O God! Forgive my mistakes and foolishness and my excesses I commit in my affairs and all those things which You are more aware of than me. O God! Forgive whatever I have done with seriousness and whatever I have done in jest, whatever I have done intentionally and whatever I have done un-intentionally. All this is from me. O God! Forgive whatever I have sent forward and whatever I have left behind and whatever I have concealed and whatever I have done openly and that also which You know more than me. It is You Who sends forward and it is You Who relegates backwards and You have power over all things.⁹⁷

17.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ الْهُدَى وَالثُّقَى وَالْعَفَافَ وَالْغِنَى

O God! I seek from You guidance and virtue and purification of the soul and being self-sufficient.⁹⁸

18.

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَارْحَمْنِي وَاهْدِنِي وَعَافِنِي وَارْزُقْنِي

O God! Forgive me, have mercy on me, give guidance to me, grant me peace and bless me with sustenance.⁹⁹

96. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 1181, (no. 6906).

97. Ibid., 1180-1181, (no. 6901).

98. Ibid., 1181, (no. 6904).

99. Ibid., 1172, (no. 6850).

19.

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّنَا آتَنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

God bless us with good in this world and in the Hereafter too and save us from the torment of the Fire!¹⁰⁰

20.

اللَّهُمَّ بِعِلْمِكَ الْعَيْبَ وَقُدْرَتِكَ عَلَى الْحَقْلِ أَحْبَبْنِي مَا عَلِمْتَ الْحَيَاةَ خَيْرًا لِي وَتَوَفَّنِي إِذَا عَلِمْتَ الْوَفَاءَ
خَيْرًا لِي اللَّهُمَّ وَأَسْأَلُكَ حَشْيَنِكَ فِي الْعَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ وَأَسْأَلُكَ كَلْمَةَ الْحَقِّ فِي الرِّضَاءِ وَالْعَصْبَ
وَأَسْأَلُكَ الْقَاصِدَ فِي الْفَقْرِ وَالغَنِّيِّ وَأَسْأَلُكَ تَعِيمًا لَا يَنْدَدُ وَأَسْأَلُكَ قُرْبَةَ عَيْنٍ لَا تَنْقَطِعُ وَأَسْأَلُكَ
الرِّضَاءَ بَعْدَ بِالْفَقْضَاءِ وَأَسْأَلُكَ بَرْدَ الْعِيشَ بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ وَأَسْأَلُكَ لَذَّةَ النَّظَرِ إِلَى وَجْهِكَ وَالشَّوْقِ إِلَى
لِقَائِكَ فِي غَيْرِ ضَرَاءٍ مُضْرِبَةٍ وَلَا فِتْنَةٍ مُضْلِلَةٍ اللَّهُمَّ زِينَا بِزِيَّةِ الْإِيمَانِ وَاجْعَلْنَا هُدَاءً مُهْدِينَ

O God! Because of Your knowledge of the unseen and because of Your power over Your creation, grant me with life till the time You think that living is best for me, and take me away from this world when You think that taking me away is best for me. O God! And I seek humility from You in public and in private, and in happiness and in sorrow want You to guide me to the truth and request You with what is between affluence and poverty, and ask from You a favour that will never end, and the coolness of the eye which will never cease. And I seek from You the strength to be content on Your decisions, and seek the blessings of life after death, and the fervour to meet You, and the bliss to see You such that I neither remain in the calamity that is burdensome nor trials which may mislead me. O God! Grant us the embellishment of faith, and make us such that we are rightly guided and are able to guide others as well.¹⁰¹

100. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 768, (no. 4522); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1171, (no. 6840).

101. Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 183, (no. 1306).

Al-Kitāb

Chapter 1

The Sharī‘ah of Worship Rituals

The objective of the religion of the prophets is purification of the soul. Attainment of excellence in this purification relies on a person's relationship of servitude with the Almighty on right footings. The stronger this relationship, the greater a person is able to achieve purification both in his concepts and in his deeds. Love, fear, sincerity, faithfulness and gratitude as an acknowledgement of His innumerable favours and blessings are the inner manifestations of this relationship. In the life of a person, this relationship generally manifests in the form of the following three: worship, obedience and support. In the religion of the prophets, worship rituals are prescribed to serve as a reminder for this relationship. The prayer and *zakāh* and animal sacrifice and '*umrah* are worship; the fast and *i'tikāf* are symbolic expressions for obedience, while *hajj* is a symbolic expression for offering support for the cause of Allah.

In the following pages, the directives of the *sharī‘ah* regarding these worship rituals will be explained.

1. The Prayer

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كَتَبًا مَوْقُوتًا (٤:١٠٣)

Indeed, the prayer is a duty incumbent on the faithful to be discharged at appointed hours. (4:103)

The most important worship ritual of Islam is the prayer. A little deliberation shows that the essence of religion is comprehension of God and an expression of humility and servility before Him. The most prominent expression of this essence is worship. Invoking and glorifying Him, praising and thanking Him and kneeling and prostrating before Him are the practical manifestations of worship. The prayer is nothing but an expression of these manifestations and, with graceful poise, combines all of them.

i. Importance of the Prayer

The prayer occupies extraordinary importance in Islam. In order to understand this importance, the following aspects need to be appreciated.

(1) The Foremost Directive

The prayer is the foremost directive of Islam. The status monotheism occupies in beliefs is exactly the same as the prayer occupies in deeds. It is evident from the Qur’ān that the prayer is the foremost consequence of the comprehension of Allah which one gets after being reminded by His revelations and, as a result of this comprehension, of the emotions of love and gratitude that appear for the Almighty in a person or should appear in him. The Almighty says:

إِنَّمَا يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرُوا بِهَا خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَسَبَحُوا بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ تَسْجَافُ
جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ حَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ (٣٢: ١٥-١٦)

Only they believe in Our revelations who when are reminded through them, prostrate themselves in adoration and give glory to their Lord and praise and thank Him and do not adopt a rebellious attitude; who forsake their beds to pray to their Lord in fear and hope; who spend [in His way] from what We have given them. (32:15-16)

The following verses of Sūrah Rūm also depict the same thing:

فَاقْمُ وَجْهَكَ لِلَّدِينِ حَنِيفًا فَطَرَ اللَّهُ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ
أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ وَأَتَقُوَّهُ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (٣٠: ٣١-٣٠)

Therefore, leaving everything aside, turn yourself to this religion. [In this manner] obey [the dictates of human] nature on which God created mankind. No change is allowed in this nature [created by] God. This is surely the right religion, although most men may not know it. [Adhere to it] by turning to Him and fear Him only and diligently offer the prayer and be not among the Idolaters. (30:30-31)

At all places in the Qur’ān where a compact style is adopted, indeed the words عَمَلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ (righteous deeds) succeed a mention of إِيمَانٍ (faith), but at places where a comprehensive style is adopted it is the mention of the prayer which immediately comes after the mention of إِيمَانٍ:

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيَقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ (٣: ٢)

These who believe without [seeing] and show diligence in offering the prayer. (2:3)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمَلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ (٢٧٧: ٢)

Indeed, those who believe and do righteous deeds and are diligent in the prayer. (2:277)

The first thing towards which Muslims are directed in order to attain *tazkiyah* (purification of the soul), which according to the Qur’ān is the very objective of Islam, is the prayer as well:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّىٰ (٨٧: ١٤-١٥)

[At that time], in fact, he succeeded who purified himself and [for this] remembered the name of his Lord and offered the prayer. (87:14-15)

Similarly, in verses where the Qur’ān has referred to the deeds which are essential for success in the Hereafter, the prayer is mentioned the foremost:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ حَاسِعُونَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ الْلَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ ... وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَواتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ (٢٣: ٩-١)

Successful are the believers, who show humility in the prayer, who avoid profane talk, and are vigilant in giving *zakāh* and who preserve their chastity ... who are true to their trusts and promises [both with regard to the Almighty and with regard to their fellow human beings] and are diligent in their prayers. (23:1-9)

In Sūrah Ma‘ārij, the Qur’ān says:

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوقًا إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ حَرُوقًا وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَثُوقًا إِلَى الْمُصَلِّينَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَعْلُومٌ لِلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومُ وَالَّذِينَ يُصَدِّقُونَ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّهِمْ مُسْتَفْقُونَ إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّهِمْ غَيْرُ مَأْمُونٍ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ ... وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِشَهَادَاتِهِمْ قَاتِلُونَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ أُولَئِكَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ مُكَرَّمَاتٍ (٢٠: ٣٥-١٩)

Indeed, man has been created very impatient. When some affliction befalls him, he becomes depressed and when good fortune befalls him, he becomes stingy. Not so those who pray, who are always steadfast in prayer and who set aside a fixed portion in their wealth for those who ask and for those [also] who are ashamed to ask and who truly believe in the Day of Reckoning and dread the punishment of their Lord – Indeed, the punishment of their Lord is not a thing to be fearless of – and those who preserve their chastity ... and those who keep their trusts and promises [both with regard to Allah and with regard to their fellow human beings] and those who stand firm in their testimonies and those who keep guard over their prayers. It is they who will be in gardens of Paradise, laden with honours. (70:19-35)

Ibn Mas‘ūd (rta) narrates that he once asked Prophet Muhammad (sws): “Which deed does Allah like the best?” He replied: “Offering the prayer on time.”¹

‘Umar (rta) once wrote an epistle to his administrators: “The most important thing in your religious affairs is the prayer. A person who protects the prayer, protects the whole religion and a person who squanders it will be the foremost in squandering other [directives of] religion.”²

(2) A Requisite for Muslim Citizenship

The prayer is a requisite for a person to be called a Muslim. The Qur’ān has made it very clear that in a Muslim state only those people can demand the rights of a Muslim who offer the prayer and pay *zakāh*. In Sūrah Tawbah, the Qur’ān, while launching an offensive against the Idolaters of Arabia, declared:

فَإِنْ تَائُبُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوْا الرِّزْكَاهَ فَإِخْرُجُوهُنُّكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ (٩:٩)

So if they repent and are diligent in the prayer and pay the *zakāh*, they shall become your brothers in religion. (9:11)

It is evident from the above stated premise that in the Hereafter also, a person should be dealt in a similar manner. The Qur’ān has very subtly alluded to this in the following words:

فَلَا صَدَقَ وَلَا صَلَى وَلَكِنْ كَذَبَ وَتَوَلَّى ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ يَتَسْطِي أَوْلَى لَكَ فَأَوْلَى ثُمَّ أَوْلَى لَكَ فَأَوْلَى (٧٥:٣١-٣٥)

But [look at this man]! He neither believed in [the good fate of the Hereafter] nor prayed; on the contrary, he denied and turned away. Then he went to his family conceitedly. Woe be to you, then woe be to you! And again woe be to you, then woe be to you!! (75:31-35)

It is implied from the contrast between the words صَلَى (prayed) with تَوَلَّى (turned away) and ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ يَتَسْطِي (then he went to his family conceitedly) that this importance has been invested in the prayer because in the sight of Allah a person who does not offer the prayer is showing arrogance and pride and the Qur’ān has made it very clear in 7:40 that a camel can enter the eye of a needle but an arrogant person cannot enter Paradise.

The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

بَيْنَ الرَّجُلِ وَبَيْنَ الشَّرِكِ وَالْكُفُرِ تَرُكُ الصَّلَاةِ

The line which demarcates disbelief and polytheism in a person is abandoning the prayer.³

1. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 89-90, (no. 527).

2. Mālik ibn Anas, *Al-Mu’aqṭā*, 9, (no. 6).

3. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 51, (no. 247).

Similarly, at another occasion, he remarked:

حَمْسُ صَلَوَاتٍ افْتَرَضْهُنَّ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى مِنْ أَحْسَنَ وُضُوءِهِنَّ وَصَلَاهُنَّ لِوَقْتِهِنَّ وَأَتَمَ رُكُوعَهُنَّ
وَخُشُوعَهُنَّ كَانَ لَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ عَهْدٌ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لَهُ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَفْعُلْ فَلَيْسَ لَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ عَهْدٌ إِنْ شَاءَ غَفَرَ
لَهُ وَإِنْ شَاءَ عَذَّبَهُ

These are the five prayers which the Almighty has made obligatory on people: a person who did ablutions in a befitting manner, offered the prayer on time and prostrated both his inner and outer-self before the Almighty, has been promised forgiveness by Him. And a person who does not do these things is not promised anything. If He wants, He will forgive him, and if He wants, He will punish him.⁴

(3) Means of Strong Adherence to Islam

The prayer is a means to remaining steadfast on Islam. The Qur’ān has informed us that a devil is deputed on a person who becomes indifferent to remembering the Almighty and evades Him: (٤٣: ٣٦) (وَمَنْ يَعْشُ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ تُفَيَّضُ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ) (We shall depute a devil on the person who evades the remembrance of the Merciful and he shall be his companion, (43:36)). This devil then becomes his permanent companion. The prayer saves a person from this indifference and evasion and protects him from the devil. It can be seen from the verses of Sūrah Mu’mīnūn (23) and Sūrah Ma‘ārij (70) quoted earlier that the directive of prayer encircles all directives that were mentioned there: they begin with the prayer and end with it. It is obvious from this that it is safeguarding the prayer which ensures a person’s adherence to Islam. No doubt, the onslaughts of Satan continue even after this but he cannot dwell permanently in the heart of a person who is punctual and ever-vigilant in offering the prayer. Like a citadel, the prayer continues to ward off Satan and protects a person’s mind and heart from his offensives. It is precisely for this reason that it has been emphasized that a person should offer it even in times of danger in whatever way he can whether on foot or while riding. In Sūrah Baqarah, where the section on the Islamic shari‘ah ends, it is said:

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَى وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَاتِنِينَ فَإِنْ خَفْتُمْ فِرِجَالًا أَوْ رُكْبَانًا فَإِذَا أَمْتُمْ
فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَمَا عَلِمْتُمْ مَا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ (٢: ٢٣٩-٢٣٨)

Be watchful over your prayers, especially the one which comes in the middle [of the morning and evening prayers when it is not easy for you to take out time from your involvements], and stand before Allah devoutly [leaving aside everything]. Then if you fear any danger, pray on foot or while riding, as may be most convenient, but when there is security, remember Allah in the very manner He has taught you, which you knew not. (2:238-239)

4. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 113, (no. 425).

On these very grounds, the Qur’ān has referred to indulgence in lust and desires as if it was an essential consequence of wasting the prayer: فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ (then, after them, there followed a pōsterity who wasted the prayer and followed after lusts, (19:59)). In Sūrah ‘Ankabūt the words are even more explicit:

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ (٤٥:٢٩)

And be steadfast in the prayer because it deters [a person] from lewdness and evil. (29:45)

The verse says that like a preacher, the prayer cautions a person that in spite of the onslaught of desire and emotions he should not forget the fact that one day he will have to face the Almighty and present an account of his deeds before Him. While explaining the above quoted verse, Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī has writes:

... those who offer the prayer, whether in public or in private, giving due regard to its etiquette and conditions, are reminded by the prayer with both its inner and outer aspects of all those realities which are necessary to keep them on the right path in life. In particular, the prayers offered in seclusion influence the life of a person a lot. A person who does not offer the prayer is like the driver of a car who is driving the car of his life with speed but who is totally indifferent and unaware of the landmarks which appear on the road to guide him and protect him from danger. It cannot be said when such a driver may fling his car into some pit.⁵

(4) As Eraser of Sins

When a person stands in prayer, he renews his commitment with God that he will try to refrain from disobeying Him. As a consequence of this, he necessarily feels ashamed of the sins he has committed in between two prayers and with new vigour and determination returns to the busy routine of life to protect himself from indulging in them. A little deliberation shows that this is the very essence of repentance and it is known that repentance cleanses a person. It has thus been said:

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفِيَ النَّهَارِ وَزَلْفًا مِنَ اللَّيلِ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُدْهِنُ السَّيِّئَاتِ ذَلِكَ ذِكْرٌ لِلَّذِاكَرِينَ (١١٤:١١)

And be diligent in your prayer at both ends of the day and in a portion of the night too. No doubt, good deeds make amends for sins. This is an a reminder for those who benefit from reminders. (11:114)

Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrates from Prophet Muhammad (sws): “Tell me if there is

5. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 6, 53.

a stream flowing near your door in which a person bathes five times a day, then will he still have a stain of dirt on him?" The people replied: "In this case, no speck of dirt would remain on him." The Prophet remarked: "This is an example of the five prayers; through them, the Almighty in a similar manner wipes out sins."⁶

(5) Means of Countering Hardships

When the Jews were invited by the Qur’ān to revive their covenant with the Almighty, it advised them to seek help from the prayer to discharge its responsibilities.⁷ The same advice was given to the believers among the Ishmaelites as well:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِنُو بِالصَّابِرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ (١٥٣:٢)

Believers! Seek help from perseverance and from the prayer. Indeed, God is with those who persevere. (2:153)

The Prophet (sws) too was advised to adhere to the prayer in order to bear with perseverance the mischief and torments of the miscreants:

فَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ الْغُرُوبِ وَمِنَ اللَّيلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ وَادْبَارَ السُّجُودِ (٤٠ - ٣٩ : ٥٠)

So bear then with what they say and give glory to your Lord and praise Him before sunrise and before sunset. And glorify Him in the night also and also after the sun bows down. (50:39-40)

This means that the prayer is the most effective means to draw the blessings of the Almighty. Consequently, it is evident from a study of the life of the Prophet (sws) that whenever he would encounter an important issue he would stand to pray.⁸ When people requested him to invoke the help of Allah for rain, the Prophet (sws) first offered the prayer and then put his hands up for invocation. At the time of solar and lunar eclipses, when it was felt that the Almighty might send His punishment, the Prophet (sws) offered the prayer. In the battles of Badr and Ahzāb, when the Muslim forces were arrayed against their opponents, the Prophet (sws) resorted to the prayer to seek help from the Almighty through it.

(6) Symbol of True Da‘wah

We are told by the Qur’ān that true reformers are the ones who hold steadfast to the divine book as the covenant of the Almighty and as a barometer which

6. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 90, (no. 528). This refers to sins which do not relate to obligations towards one's fellow human beings or which do not require repentance, making amends or atonement.

7. Qur’ān, 2:45.

8. Abū al-Fadā’ Ismā‘il ibn ‘Umar ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Azīm*, vol. 1 (Lahore: Amjad Academy, 1982), 87.

distinguishes good from evil and are diligent in the prayer:

وَالَّذِينَ يُمْسِكُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّا لَا نُنَفِّي أَحَدَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ (١٧٠:٧)

And those who hold tightly the Book of God and who are diligent in the prayer [are those who reform], We shall not deny these reformers their reward. (7:170)

While explaining these verses, Imam Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

This declaration of the Qur’ān is a benchmark to judge all movements and undertakings that aim at reforming the Muslims and calling them to Islam. It is evident from this that only that movement of calling people to Islam is on the right path in whose basic ideology, program, objective – in short, in all its spheres the prayer and adherence to it is the foremost and is of the same importance which according to the Qur’ān it occupies in the covenant with God and in the struggle for its enforcement. Movements and undertakings that aim at the revival of the Muslims and their reformation in which the prayer is not the foremost and does not hold due significance are fruitless and devoid of any blessings of Allah. The reason for this is that they are without the backing and support on which the edifice of such movements rest and also bereft of the spirit which this edifice needs to take life from.⁹

(7) Means of Perseverance on the Truth

It is obvious that it is only in the companionship of the Almighty that one can persevere on the path of truth and the prayer is so close to the Almighty that it is His stand-in for us in this world. The verse (٩٦: ١٩) (وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْرُبْ (prostrate and attain my nearness, (96:16)) refers precisely to this aspect. Therefore, if one wants to attain the companionship of the Almighty while striving in His cause, he should adhere to the Book of God and to the prayer. The most important way to achieve this end is through the late night prayer of *tahajjud*. So, when the Prophet (sws) was directed by the Almighty to expand his sphere of *indhār*, he was told to be diligent in this prayer to get the help needed to bear the heavy burden of responsibilities of this phase. The reason for this, as informed by the Qur’ān, was that the time of *tahajjud* is a time when one’s heart and mind are fresh and receptive and is a time that is very appropriate to understand the Qur’ān. In the words of Imam Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī: “Since this time is the very time at which the mind is at rest and the heart fully conscious, hence the words that emanate from the tongue are very effective and make room in one’s heart. The reciter himself receives them as if they were the testimony of his own heart and to other listeners the words are also very stirring.”¹⁰

The Qur’ān says:

9. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 1, 203.

10. Ibid., vol. 9, 25.

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُزَمِّلُ قُمْ اللَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا نَصْفُهُ أَوْ اثْنُصُهُ مِنْهُ قَلِيلًا أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتَّلْ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا إِنَّا سَنُنْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا شَعِيلًا إِنَّ نَاسَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُ وَطْنًا وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلًا إِنَّ لَكَ فِي النَّهَارِ سَبِحًا طَوِيلًا وَإِذْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَّلِّ إِلَيْهِ تَبَّيلًا (٨-١: ٧٣)

O you enfolded in your shawl! Stand [in prayer] by night, but not all night. Half the night, or even less or a little more and [in this prayer of yours] recite the Qur’ān in a slow measured tone. Because soon We shall lay on you the burden of a heavy word. Indeed, this rising by night is very suitable for the mind’s peace and the heart’s resolve and for the correctness of the speech. Because during the daytime you will be hard-pressed [with this task; so pray at this time] and remember the name of your Lord and [in this loneliness of the night] devote yourself entirely to Him. (73:1-8)

It is evident from certain narratives that the Almighty directs His special attention to this world at this time. Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrates from the Prophet (sws): “Every night the Almighty descends to our nearest sky. When one-third of the night remains He says: ‘Who is offering supplications that I may accept them? Who is asking that I may give him? Who is calling for forgiveness that I may forgive him.’”¹¹

(8) As the Nature of every Object of the Universe

If only a person has eyes through which he can really see, there is a doubtless reality that he can observe: every particle of this universe glorifies and praises the Almighty, offers his gratitude and bows down before Him. He may not be able to understand this praise and glorification, but he can readily observe that just as the outer-self of a thing bows down before the Almighty and is ever-obedient to Him, the inner-self too can be no different. Animals which walk on the earth, trees which flourish in the orchards, birds which chirp in the sky, fish which swim in the seas, the sun, the moon and the stars which shine in the sky all bear this testimony through their very existence:

سَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَقْعُدُونَ سَبِّحُهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا (٤٤: ١٧)

The seven heavens, the earth, and all who dwell in them exalt Him. And there is not one thing that does not exalt Him while praising and thanking Him. Yet you cannot understand their exaltation. Benevolent is He and Forgiving. (17:44)

All these are fully aware of their prayer and exaltation of the Almighty. If a person has a keen eye, he can see that when birds with their wings outstretched fly in the sky they are in fact bowing down in humility to the Almighty:

11. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 183, (no. 1145); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 307, (no. 1773).

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَنِ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالطَّيْرُ صَافَاتٍ كُلُّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتُهُ وَتَسْبِيحةُ
وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٤١:٢٤)

Do you not see how God is exalted by those in the heavens and those on earth and the birds as they wing their way [across the sky]. Each knows his prayer and exaltation of the Almighty and God has knowledge of all that they do. (24:41)

Writes Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī:

Every object of this universe in its nature has an Abrahamic temperament. The sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains and the animals that tread the earth all follow the divine law on which they have been created. None of them deviates from this law in the slightest manner. The sun whom some foolish people worship bears testimony from its very existence that it stands and bows before the Almighty every day. It raises his head at the time of sunrise and then stands before the Almighty till noon. After midday, it kneels before Him and at sunset prostrates before Him and remains in this state all night. It is to this reality which the waxing and waning of the moon and the rising and setting of stars point. The same is true for the mountains, trees and animals. Their shadows at all times stand, kneel or bow down before the Almighty and a little deliberation shows that such is the Abrahamic temperament of this shadow that it always remains opposite to the sun. If the sun is in the east, the shadow will stretch in the west and vice versa. In other words, the shadow of every object from its very existence tells us that it is not the sun but its Creator who is worthy of prostration.¹²

The Qur'ān says:

أَوْ لَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ يَتَفَكَّرُ ظَالِمٌ عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَالشَّمَائِلِ سُجَّدًا لِلَّهِ وَهُمْ دَاهِرُونَ وَلَهُ
يَسْجُدُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ دَائِبٍ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ (١٦:٤٩-٤٨)

And have they not seen that whatever the Almighty has created casts its shadow right and left, prostrating itself before God in all humility? And to God bow all the creatures of the heavens and the earth, and the angels too and they are never rebellious. (16:48-49)

Consequently, when a person stands in prayer, he in fact answers this call of praying, prostration and glorification made by every object of this universe. He brings his nature in harmony with the universe and declares thereby that he would not lag behind anyone and will prostrate not only his body but also his soul before the Almighty who created Him. He will never take a separate route from the rest of

12. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 229.

the creation in which he has no companion and if there are such people, then they are the ones for whom the wrath of the Almighty has become certain:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَنِ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنِ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ
وَاللَّوَابُ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنَ النَّاسِ وَكَثِيرٌ حَقًّا عَلَيْهِ الْعَذَابُ (٢٢:٢٢)

Do you not see that those in the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon and the stars and the mountains and the trees and the beasts, and countless men – all prostrate before God, and there are many on whom punishment has become incumbent. (22:18)

(9) As Real Life

The preaching of the messengers of Allah has been called life by the Qur’ān: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَهْجِبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلَرَسُولَهُ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحِسِّنُكُمْ (٢٤:٨) (Believers! Respond to Allah and His Messenger when He calls you to that which will give you life, (8:24)). The reason for this is that no doubt every living person has a life to live but real life, which has been called as light, inner calm and faith, is only secured through the remembrance of the Almighty. The Prophets of Allah summon people towards this remembrance of Allah and for this purpose they call them foremost towards the prayer. What is the prayer? When the remembrance of God, His comprehension and the sense of nearness to Him reaches the level of excellence then this becomes the prayer. All the sages of the world are unanimous that real life is the life of the soul and this life is nothing but the remembrance of God, His comprehension and the sense of nearness to Him. Only the prayer can furnish such a life to man. The Qur’ān has made a subtle reference to this at one place by placing “the prayer” parallel to “life” and “sacrifice” parallel to “death”:

فُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَسُكْنِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٦٢:٦)

Say: “My prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death, are all for God, Lord of the Universe.” (6:162)

If a person grasps this reality, then he keenly awaits the time of a prayer the way he awaits the time of food each day. His eagerness for the prayer is the eagerness of a thirsty person for water and that of a hungry person for food. The prayer becomes his subsistence from the Almighty. It instils happiness in him and invigorates him. The Prophet Jesus (sws) is reported to have said: “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God,” (Matthew, 4:4). Just as people eat various types of food to savour their taste, he nourishes his soul by reading various passages of the Qur’ān, different supplications and liturgies. It is the prayer which enlivens and freshens up a person when hardships bog him down. It is the prayer which like a breath of fresh air cleanses the filth of sin. In the autumn of frustrations, the prayer is the hope of spring and when adversities embrace a person from all sides, it is the prayer which

is his rock of asylum. These lines should not be counted as some poetical utterance. It is towards these feelings that the Prophet (sws) has alluded by the words: قُمْ يَا بَلَالَ فَارْحَنَا بِالصَّلَاةِ (Rise O Bilal!¹³ And soothe us through the prayer!) and جَعَلْتُ فَرْجَ عَيْنِي فِي الصَّلَاةِ (the coldness of my eyes has been placed in the prayer.)¹⁴

ii. History of the Prayer

The history of the prayer is as old as religion itself. The concept of prayer is present in every religion and its rituals and timings are also identifiable in these religions. The hymns sung by the Hindus, the chants of the Zoroastrians, the invocations of the Christians and the psalms of the Jews are all its remnants. The Qur’ān has informed us that all the prophets of God have directed their followers to offer it. It also occupies a very prominent position in the religion of the Prophet Abraham (sws) which the Prophet Muhammad (sws) revived in Arabia. When Abraham (sws) settled his son Ishmael (sws) in the barren land of Makkah, he underlined the objective of this endeavour as: رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ (Lord! So that they show diligence in the prayer, (14:37)). At that instance, he had also prayed: رَبُّ احْعَنْتِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمَنْ ذُرَّتِي (O Lord! Make me and my progeny diligent in the prayer, (14:40)). About Ishmael (sws), the Qur’ān says: أَصَلَّاكُمْ تَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَرْكُوكُمْ مَا يَعْدُ أَبَاؤُكُمْ (he would instruct his family to pray, (19:55)). The people of Shu‘ayb (sws) ridiculed him by saying: وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ (does your prayer teach you that we leave the deities of our forefathers? (11:87)). About the prophets that belong to the progeny of Isaac (sws) and Jacob (sws), the Qur’ān says: وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فَعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ (and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds and to be diligent in the prayer, (21:73)). When the Prophet Moses (sws) was called to prophethood, he was told: وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ (O: ٢٠). When the Prophet Moses (sws) was called to prophethood, he was told: وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ (O: ٢٠). About the Prophet Zákáriyyā (sws), the words used are: وَهُوَ قَائِمٌ يُصَلِّي فِي الْمَحَرَابِ (while he was standing in prayer in the chamber, (3:39)). The Prophet Jesús (sws) said about himself: وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ (and God has directed me to offer the prayer, (19:31)). Luqmān was considered a wise person among the Arabs. We are told by the Qur’ān that he gave the following words of advice to his son: يَا بُنَيَ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ (O my son! Show diligence in the prayer (31:17)). The Almighty pledged a promise with the Israelites in the words:

إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ لَعِنْ أَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَيْتُمُ الزَّكَوةَ ... لَا كُفَّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيَّاتُكُمْ (٥: ١٢)

I am with you if you are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh* ... I will erase your sins, (5:12).

The Qur’ān bears witness to the fact that in the times of the Prophet Muhammad (sws), the righteous among the Jews and Christians adhered to the prayer:

13. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 298, (no. 4986).

14. Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 469, (no. 3391).

مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَاتَمَةٌ يَتَلَوَنَ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ آتَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ (١٣:٣)

Of the People of the Book, there is a group which is honouring their covenant with God. They stand at night to recite his verses and prostrate themselves before the Almighty. (3:113)

The same has been attributed to the Idolaters of Arabia:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ (١٠٧ : ٤ - ٥)

So woe to these [custodians of the Baytullah] who offer the prayer while being unmindful [of its essence]. (107:4-5)

Jirān al-'Awd, a poet of the *jāhiliyyah* age, says:¹⁵

وَأَدْرَكَنَ أَعْجَازًا مِنَ اللَّيلِ بَعْدَ مَا

أَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ الْعَابِدُ الْمُتَحَنِّفُ

*wa adrakna a'jazaṇ min al-layli ba'da mā
aqām al-ṣalāh al-'ābid al-mutahannif*

(And these means of transport caught the last part of the night when the diligent and dedicated worshipper had finished the prayer)

A 'shā Wā'il says:¹⁶

وَسُبْحَانَ عَلَى حِينِ الْعَشَيَاتِ وَالضَّحْئَى

وَلَا تَعْبُدُ الشَّيْطَانَ وَاللَّهُ فَاعْبُدْهَا

*wa sabbiḥ 'alā hīn al-'ashiyyāt wa al-duhā
wa lā ta'būd al-shayṭān wallāhi fa'budā*

(And offer *tasbīh*¹⁷ day and night and do not worship Satan; instead worship God only)

Some Ḥadīth narratives also mention that the Jews and Christians and the followers of the religion of Abraham (sws) offered the prayer.

'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar (rta) says that 'Umar (rta) or probably the Prophet (sws) himself said: "If any one of you has two pieces of cloth, he should offer the

15. Muḥammad Murtadā al-Zubaydī, *Tāj al-'arūs min jawāhir al-qāmūs*, vol. 23 (n.p.: Dār al-hidāyah, n.d.), 173.

16. Al-Zubaydī, *Tāj al-'arūs*, vol. 6, 450.

17. Use of the word *tasbīh* in this couplet shows that it is used for the prayer. In the Qur'ān also, this connotation of the word is common.

prayer in them and if he only has one then he should use it as a loin cloth. He should not wrap it around himself in prayer like the Jews do.”¹⁸

Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī (rta) narrates that he used to pray three years prior to meeting the Prophet (sws). “For whom,” it was asked. He said: “For Allah.”¹⁹

The prayer offered by the Jews and Christians has been referred to in the Bible at various places and just as in the Qur’ān the prayer has been called after its constituent rituals and utterances like remembering Allah, reading a portion of the Qur’ān, invoking Allah, glorifying Him and kneeling and prostrating before Him, likewise in the Bible also the prayer has been called after its constituent practices and utterances.²⁰

From there he [–Abraham–] went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD. (Genesis, 12:8)

Abram bowed down in prostration, and God spoke to him. (Genesis, 17:3)

The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. (Genesis, 18:22)

He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will prostrate ourselves and then we will come back to you.” (Genesis, 22:5)

And [Isaac] built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD. (Genesis, 26:25)

And they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down in prostration. (Exodus, 4:31)

In the morning O Lord, you will hear my voice. I will wait for you in your presence after the prayer. (Psalm 5:3)

But I, by your great mercy, will come into your house; in reverence will I bow down in prostration toward your holy temple. (Psalm 5:7)

But I call to God, and the LORD saves me. Evening, morning and noon I will cry out in distress, and he will hear my voice. (Psalm 55:16-17)

The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Come, let us

18. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 168, (no. 635).

19. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 1086-1088, (no. 6359).

20. All these translations of the various excerpts of the Bible are in accordance with the Arabic version, which was in turn directly translated from the Greek version.

kneel and bow down in worship, let us bend our knees before the LORD our Maker. (Psalm 95:5-6)

I will bow down in prostration toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word. (Psalm 138:2)

When your people Israel have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you, and when they turn back to you and confess your name, praying and making supplication to you in this temple, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them back to the land you gave to their fathers. (Kings, 8:33-4)

Stand at the gate of the Lord’s house and there proclaim this message: Hear the word of the Lord all you people of Judah who come through these gates to prostrate before the Lord. (Jeremiah, 7:2)

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been signed, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God and glorified him, just as he had done before. (Daniel, 6:10)

So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. (Daniel, 9:3)

After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. (Matthew, 14:23)

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” (Matthew, 26:36)

Going a little farther, he fell down in prostration and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.” (Matthew, 26:39)

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he used to pray. (Mark, 1:35)

“Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.” (Luke, 22:46)

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer at the ninth part of the day.²¹ (Acts, 3:1)

21. This refers to 3 pm in the afternoon, ie. the time of ‘asr.

About noon at the seventh part²² of the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. (Acts, 10:9)

When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. (Acts, 12:12)

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we usually prayed. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. (Acts, 16:13)

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns and glorifying God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. (Acts, 16:25)

When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. (Acts 20:36)

Here it should be noted that the prayer was always offered five times a day. According to a narrative,²³ Gabriel himself informed the Prophet (sws) of this fact. No doubt, the Jews now offer the prayer thrice a day and one of the above quoted excerpts also refer to three prayers. However, Louis Ginsberg while presenting his research on the Talmud of Jerusalem has explained that this phenomenon is similar in nature to what the Shiites have in them: by combining *zuhr* with ‘*qsr* and *maghrib* with ‘*ishā* on the principle of *jam’ bayna al-ṣalātayn* (combining two prayers) they have practically made these four into two and if we add *fajr* to them, the total number of prayers will come out to be three. Ginsberg has pointed to the fact that in the time of the writing down of Talmud, the Jews used to pray five times a day: thrice for the prayer which is offered till now, and twice for reciting the Shema. However, later because of certain practical difficulties the prayers of the morning and evening were combined and ultimately three prayers remained.²⁴

After the revelation of the Qur’ān, Sūrah Fatiḥah is the supplication of the prayer. It is evident from the Bible that similar supplications were revealed in all the divine books.

In the Torah, the words of this supplication are:

The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he will never leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.²⁵ (Exodus 34:6-7)

22. This refers to the afternoon, ie. the time of *zuhr*.

23. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 105, (no. 393).

24. Abraham I Katsh, *Judaism in Islam*, 1st ed. (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1954), 10.

25. This is a reference to a special law of the Almighty relating to the progeny of

The supplication of the Psalms is:

Hear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Guard my life, for I am devoted to you. You are my God; save your servant who trusts in you. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I call to you all day long. Bring joy to your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you.

Hear my prayer, O LORD; listen to my cry for mercy. In the day of my trouble I will call to you, for you will answer me. Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord; no deeds can compare with yours. All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name. For you are great and do marvellous deeds; you alone are God.

Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths of the grave.

The arrogant are attacking me, O God; a band of ruthless men seeks my life – men without regard for you. But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Turn to me and have mercy on me; grant your strength to your servant and save the son of your maidservant. Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me. (Psalm 86:1-17)

The supplication of the *Injīl* is:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil for kingdom and glory and power are always Yours. (Matthew 6:9-13)

This is the history of the prayer. It is evident from it that when the Qur’ān directed people to pray, it was nothing unknown to them. They were fully aware of its pre-requisites and etiquette, rituals and utterances. Consequently, it was not required that the Qur’ān mention its details. Just as it used to be offered as a practice of Abraham’s religion, the Prophet (sws) at the behest of the Qur’ān promulgated it with certain changes among his followers and they are offering it

generation after generation in the same manner. Thus, the source of this prayer is the consensus of the Muslims and their perpetual adherence to it. In the following sections, the details of the prayer shall be presented here from this consensus of the Muslims and their perpetual adherence.

iii. Objective of the Prayer

We have been told to remember the Almighty at all times in the following verse: يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُو اللَّهَ ذُكْرًا كَثِيرًا وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا (٤٢:٤١) (Believers! Celebrate the praises of Allah in abundance and glorify Him morning and evening, (33:41-42)). The best manner to remember the Almighty is through the prayer because it is in the prayer that a person's whole being remembers the Almighty and he becomes a picture of this remembrance. Consequently, five prayers in a day have been made obligatory to maintain this remembrance in a person.

When the Prophet Moses (sws) was appointed a Prophet, he was told:

إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلُعْ تَعَلَّمْ إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُورِي وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَمَّا إِلَيْهِ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي (٢٠:١٢-١٤)

I am your Lord. Take off your shoes, for you are now in the sacred valley of Tuwā. And [be informed that] that I have chosen you for prophethood. Therefore listen to what shall be revealed. I am God. Indeed, there is no god but Me. So serve Me, and for My remembrance pray with vigilance. (20:12-14)

iv. Pre-Requisites of the Prayer

Following are the pre-requisites of the prayer:

- A person must not be in a state of inebriation.
- If the person is a woman, then she should not be in her state of menstruation or puerperal discharge.
- A person must have done the ceremonial ablution (*wudū*) and in case of *janābah* or menstruation or puerperal discharge must have taken the ceremonial bath.
- In case of being on a journey or being sick or in case of non-availability of water, a person can offer the *tayammum* (dry ablution) in place of both the ceremonial ablution and the ceremonial bath.
- A person must face the *qiblah*.

These four things have always remained as the essential pre-requisites of the prayer. However, since the Arabs were ignorant of divine guidance for a long time ever since the Prophet Ishmael (sws) left them centuries ago they were not very aware of these pre-requisites; thus the Qur'ān in order to remind them of these stated them with full clarity in the following words:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرُبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَئْتُمْ سُكَارَى حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا جُنَاحَ لِإِلَّا عَابِرِي سَيِّلٍ حَتَّىٰ تَعْتَسِلُوا وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَى أَوْ عََيْ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنْكُمْ مِّنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَامْسَتُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ

نَجِدُوا مَاء فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَبِيًّا فَامْسَحُوا بُوْجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوا غَفُورًا (٤٣:٤)

Believers! Do not approach the place of the prayer when you are drunk till you know what you are saying nor when you are [ceremonially] unclean until you have bathed yourselves except if the intention is to pass through [the prayer place]. And if you are sick or on a journey, or when you have relieved yourselves or had intercourse with women and you find no water, take some clean mud and wipe your faces and your hands with it. Gracious is God and forgiving. (4:43)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَاقِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُؤُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهِرُوا وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَى أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُمْ مِنَ الْعَائِطِ أَوْ لَمْ أَمْسِمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَبِيًّا فَامْسَحُوا بُوْجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ مِنْهُ مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ حَرَاجٍ وَلَكِنْ يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلَيَتَمَّ نِعْتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشَكُّرُونَ (٦:٥)

Believers! When you rise to pray, wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbow, and wipe your heads and wash your feet to the ankle. And if you are [ceremonially] unclean, bathe yourselves. But if you are sick or on a journey, or when, you have just relieved yourselves or had intercourse with women, you find no water, take some clean mud and wipe your faces and your hands with it. God does not wish to burden you; He seeks only to purify you and to perfect His favour to you so that you may express gratitude. (5:6)

Regarding the *qiblah*, the Qur'an says:

قَدْ نَرَى تَنَّقُّلَ وَجْهَكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ فَلَنُوَيْسِنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلْ وَجْهَكَ شَطَرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَحِيتُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُوا وَجْهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ (١٤٤:٢)

We have seen you turn your face many times towards the sky. So, [O Prophet!] We have decided to turn you towards the *qiblah* that you like. So turn your face towards the Holy Mosque; wherever you are, turn your faces towards it [in the prayer]. (2:144)

These verses have declared that the states of inebriation and *janābah* are equal as far as terminating the prayer is concerned. The Almighty has directed Muslims not to go near the place of prayer in these states. It is evident from this that both are impure states. The only difference is that inebriation affects the mind and *janābah* the body. It is evident to every person that just as liquor arrests his intellectual power, the spiritual impediment caused by *janābah* in a person deprives him of the inner satisfaction and presence of mind that is a requirement of the prayer. The Almighty has however given one relief to a person who is in

the state of *janābah* that he can pass through a mosque in this state if some need arises. In order to come out of this state, the ceremonial bath has been prescribed. Without this bath, the prayer cannot be offered. One should have this bath in a thorough and complete manner. The Qur’ānic words اَطْهَرُوا (itṭaharū) and اَغْسِلُوا (igħtasilū) testify to this. The way the Prophet (sws) set about following this directive, as mentioned in various Ahādīth, can be summarized as:

First the hands should be washed; then the genital area should be thoroughly cleaned by the left hand; then *wudū* should be done except that feet should be washed later at the end; then while inserting the fingers in the hair, water should be soaked into it so that it reaches its roots; then water should be poured all over the body; in the end, the feet should be washed.

Ā’ishah (rta) reports that when the Prophet (sws) would have the ceremonial bath after *janābah*, he would first wash both hands. Then he would clean his genital area by the left hand by pouring water on it by the right one. Then he would do *wudū* the same way as *wudū* is done for the prayer. He would then take some water and insert his fingers in the roots of his hair until when he saw that the water reached the skin, he would then pour three handfuls of water on his head; then he would drench all his body with water and then wash both feet.²⁶

Ibn ‘Abbās (rta) reports: ‘My aunt Maymūnah [once] told me: ‘I placed some water [in a utensil] before the Prophet (sws) so that he could have the ceremonial bath of *janābah*. He first washed both his hands two or three times. Then he slid his hand in the utensil and poured some water over his private area and washed it with his left hand. He then thoroughly rubbed this hand on the ground and did *wudū* the way it is done before the prayer. He then took three handfuls of water and poured them on his head. Then he washed all his body. He then stepped aside and washed both his feet.’’²⁷

The method of doing *wudū* that is mentioned in these verses is that first the face shall be washed and the hands up to the elbows and after that the whole of the head shall be wiped and after that the feet shall be washed. The wiping of the whole head is essential because for this directive the words are وَأَنْسَحُوا بِرُؤُوسِكُمْ (wipe your head) and those who are aware of the subtleties of the Arabic language know that on such occasions the letter ب signifies completeness. Similarly, it apparently seems that the directive regarding feet is governed by the verb أَرْجُلُكُمْ (wipe). However, the words إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ (up to the ankles) after وَأَنْسَحُوا (your feet) declined in the accusative are decisive that this directive is coordinated to أَيْدِيكُمْ (your hands). Had they been coordinated to رُؤُوسِكُمْ (your heads) the words إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ (up to the ankles) would have been redundant. We can see this from the verses of *tayammum* where wiping has not been made conditional to إِلَى الْمَرَاقِفِ (up to the elbows). Hence, the feet shall necessarily be washed. Their directive has been deferred merely to keep intact the sequence of washing the limbs in *wudū*.

26. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 142, (no. 718).

27. Ibid., 143, (no. 722).

How did the Prophet (sws) do *wudū*? If all the narratives are collected in this regard, the following picture emerges: First, he would clean his teeth and then start with *wudū* from the right side. He would begin by washing both hands and then rinsing the mouth three times. He would then pour water in his nose three times and thoroughly clean his nose. Then he would wash his face three times and run fingers through his beard; then he would wash his hands till the elbows and then he would take water separately and wipe the head and with it clean the ears from the inside and the outside. The manner in which he would wipe his head would be that he would take both his hands from the forehead right to the back of his head and then would bring them back. He would then wash his right foot first and then the left.²⁸

Sometimes, the Prophet (sws) would wash the limbs just one or two times in *wudū*.²⁹

It is evident from certain Ahādīth that the Prophet (sws) mentioned the blessings of saying: أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ³⁰ after doing *wudū* and of praying two *rak’at*.³¹

It is also evident from certain other Ahādīth that the Prophet (sws) would do *wudū* before going off to sleep at night and urge other people also to do it.³² In particular, he would like and urge people to do *wudū* in the state of *janābah* before sleeping, eating food and going near one’s wife a second time.³³

Following are some of the Prophetic sayings regarding the blessings of *wudū*:

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar (rta) says that the Prophet (sws) once said: “When a believer does *wudū* wherein he rinses his mouth, the sins of his mouth are wiped out and when he puts water in his nose, the sins of his nose get wiped out; when he washes his face the sins of his face are wiped out even [as far as] from under his eye lashes; and when he washes both his hands, the sins of hands are wiped out even [as far as] from under his nails and when he wipes his head, the sins of his head are wiped out even [as far as] from his ears; and when he washes his feet the sins of his feet are wiped out even [as far as] from under the nails.” He then said: “Going to the mosque and praying further [adds] to this.”³⁴

Abū Hurayrah (rta) reports from the Prophet (sws): “When the people of my

28. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 32, 37, (nos. 159; 185); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 114-115, 118, (nos. 538; 555).

29. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 32, (nos. 157, 158).

30. I bear witness that there is no god except Allah; He is alone and has no partners and I bear witness that Muhammad (sws) is his servant and messenger.

31. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 117-118, (nos. 553, 554).

32. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 45, (no. 247); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1177-1178, (no. 6882).

33. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 51, (no. 288); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 139-140, (nos. 699, 700, 707).

34. Mālik ibn Anas, *Al-Mu’attā*, 24, (no. 67). Obviously sins which relate to the rights of human beings or which require repentance, making amends or atonement are not implied here.

ummah shall be called over on the Day of Judgement, their foreheads, hands and feet will be bright because of the effects of *wudū*. So whoever wishes can increase this brightness.”³⁵

Once *wudū* is done, it remains intact until something which terminates it is not encountered. Consequently, the directive of *wudū* is for the state in which it no longer remains intact except if a person does *wudū* in spite of being in the state of *wudū* for the sake of freshness. In such a situation, it is not a requirement though something which earns a person a lot of reward.

Following are the things which terminate *wudū*.

- i. urination,
- ii. defecation,
- iii. passing the wind whether with sound or without it, and
- iv. discharge of *madhi*³⁶ or *wadi*.³⁷

The above things terminate the *wudū* except if they occur because of some disease. Sleep and unconsciousness themselves do not terminate *wudū*; however, since in these states a person is not able to know for certain whether his *wudū* is intact or not, it is essential to do *wudū* after them as a precautionary measure.

If, in the case of a journey, sickness or unavailability of water, *wudū* and the ceremonial bath become difficult, in the verses of Sūrah Nisā and Sūrah Mā’idah quoted above the Almighty has allowed the believers to do *tayammum* (dry ablution). The verses go on to state the method of *tayammum* as well: hands should be rubbed on a pure surface and wiped over the face and hands. It is reported about the Prophet (sws) that for this he struck both his hands on mud and blew on them and wiped the left hand on the right and the right hand on the left and then wiped both hands on the face.³⁸ The Qur’ān has clarified that the *tayammum* suffices for all type of impurities. It can thus be done both after things that terminate the *wudū* and after states which need the ceremonial bath. Similarly, it needs to be appreciated that in case of being on a journey or being sick, *tayammum* can be done even if water is available. Writes Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī:

... in case of sickness, the ceremonial bath and *wudū* can cause harm and thus this relief was given. Similarly, in case of a person being on a journey, a person may encounter circumstances in which he might have to limit himself to *tayammum* only. For example, water may not be available in large quantities. In such cases, using it for bathing etc might leave it scanty for drinking or there could be a chance that if a person starts preparing to have a bath he might be left behind from his fellow companions of the caravan or a situation may arise when having a bath may become very difficult in a train,

35. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 29, (no. 136); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 121, (no. 579).

36. Pre-seminal prostatic fluid discharge in men, and sexual vaginal discharge in women. (Translator)

37. A thick white secretion discharged after urination. (Translator)

38. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 59, 61, (nos. 338, 347); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 85-86, (nos. 321, 322).

ship or aeroplane that a person is travelling in.³⁹

The Prophet (sws), by drawing an analogy with this directive of *tayammum* wiped his socks and turban⁴⁰ instead of washing the limbs they are worn on. He also allowed people to wipe their socks if they are worn after doing *wudū*. For a stationed person this was allowed for one day and for a traveller for three days.⁴¹

Another relief given by the Prophet (sws) on the basis of this analogy was that if the hair of women is plaited, then pouring water over them without disentangling them was enough.⁴² Still another relief on this basis was that if states which require the ceremonial bath to become pure take the form of sickness, then the ceremonial bath can be done once and other prayers can be offered without it as well.⁴³

Tayammum, no doubt, does not clean a person; however, a little deliberation shows that it serves as a reminder for the real means of achieving cleanliness and as such has special importance. The temperament of the *shari‘ah* is that if a directive cannot be followed in its original form or it becomes very difficult to follow it, then lesser forms should be adopted to serve as its reminder. An advantage of this is that once circumstances return to normal, one becomes inclined to follow the directive in its original form.

It is essential for the prayer that the direction of the *qiblah* be ascertained. It is obvious that without this ascertainment, congregational prayers cannot be arranged for. In divine religions, this directive has always been present because of this very reason. It is mentioned in Sūrah Yūnus (10:87) that when the Prophet Moses (sws) started to organize the Israelites in Egypt on the basis of religion, the Almighty directed him to identify certain areas in Egypt for prayers and the houses which they identify for the prayer should be designated as *qiblah* and the congregational prayer should be offered facing them. Later, this status was enjoyed by the ark of the covenant mentioned in Sūrah Baqarah until the Bayt al-Maqdis was constructed. When Muhammad (sws) was called to prophethood, the Jews would pray while facing the Bayt al-Maqdis. He was also directed by the Qur’ān (2:143) to the same and was told that the rationale behind this directive was to test the Ishmaelites that whether they follow the Prophet (sws) or disobey him because of their prejudice. Once this objective was achieved, the *qiblah* was reverted to the Bayt al-Harām.

The verse 2:144 of Sūrah Baqarah quoted earlier states this directive. The words *Masjid al-Harām* of this verse refer to the place of worship in whose centre lies the Baytullāh. The words which direct Muslims to turn towards it are

39. Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 2, 303.

40. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 36, 39-40, (nos. 182, 203, 205); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 127-129, (nos. 622, 633).

41. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 130, (no. 639).

42. Ibid., 146, (no. 744).

43. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 42, 53-54, (nos. 228, 306); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 147-148, (no. 753).

فَوَلْ وَجْهك شَطَرَ الْمَسْجَدِ الْحَرَامِ (so turn your face towards the Holy Mosqué, (2:144)). It is evident from these words that the requirement is just to face the Baytullah and not to face it dead straight. However, it is emphasized that wherever the Muslims are whether inside the Masjid al-Harām or outside it – wherever they are they should face this mosque while praying. The reason for this emphasis is that the Jews and the Christians while inside the Bayt al-Maqdis would make it the *qiblah*; however, outside it they would make the east or the west as their *qiblah*. Consequently, Muslims were directed that whether stationed at their residences or while travelling and whether inside the Masjid al-Harām or outside it, at all places they should face this mosque while praying.

Obviously, circumstances in which it is difficult to ascertain the direction of the Masjid al-Harām or when a person is forced to pray while walking or on some means of transport, there is an exception to this directive. It is reported that the Prophet (sws) would pray the optional prayer on his camel in the direction it walked thinking that stopping would cause problems for the caravan.⁴⁴

v. Rituals of the Prayer

Following are the rituals of the prayer which are laid down in the *shari‘ah*:

The prayer should begin with *raf‘ al-yadayn* (raising high both hands);

qiyām (standing upright) should ensue;

it should be followed by the *rukū‘* (kneeling down);

qawmah (standing up after the *rukū‘*) should then be done;

two consecutive prostrations should then follow;

in the second and last *rak‘at* of each prayer, a person should do *qa‘dah* (to sit with legs folded backwards);

when a person intends to end the prayer, he can do so by turning his face during this *qa‘dah*.

These rituals are substantiated by the consensus of the Companions (rta) and the perpetual adherence (*tayātur*) of the *ummah* to these rituals. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: صَلُّوا كَمَا رَأَيْتُمْنِي أَصْلِي (offer the prayer in the very manner you see me offering it).⁴⁵ Consequently, for this purpose, the thorough and befitting manner in which the Prophet (sws) used to say his prayer is detailed out below:

(1) Raf‘ al-Yadayn

Sometimes, the Prophet (sws) would do *raf‘ al-yadayn* while saying the *takbīr*, sometimes before it and sometimes after it.⁴⁶ His hands would be open, and he would not completely join together the fingers of the hand nor open them completely.⁴⁷ He would sometimes raise his hands up to the level of his shoulders,

44. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 160, 176, (nos. 1000, 1098, 1099); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 285, (no. 1618).

45. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 104, (no. 631).

46. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 120, (nos. 735, 737); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 165, (nos. 862, 864, 865).

47. Abū Dā’ud, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 197, (no. 753); Abū Bakr Muhammad ibn Ishāq ibn

and sometimes as high as the upper portion of the ears.⁴⁸

It is evident from certain narratives that the Prophet (sws) at some instances did the *raf'* *al-yadayn* before and after the *rukū'*.⁴⁹ Similarly, he would also do it while getting up for the third *rak'at*⁵⁰ and sometimes before and after prostrating too.⁵¹

(2) Qiyām

In the *qiyām* position, he would stand straight⁵² with hands tied in front.⁵³ He would hold his hands in a manner that a part of the right hand would be placed on the back of the left hand, a part of it below the left hand and a part on the wrist.⁵⁴ He stopped people from tying hands in a manner that the left hand be placed on top of the right one.⁵⁵

(3) Rukū'

While doing the *rukū'*, the Prophet (sws) would place his hands on his knees such that it would seem that he is grasping them.⁵⁶ The fingers would be open and placed below the knees.⁵⁷ He would not let his elbows touch his sides.⁵⁸ Both hands would be stretched like a bow.⁵⁹ He would neither bend his head nor lift it upwards but would keep it aligned with his back⁶⁰ and would say: "O People! A person who did not straighten his back while kneeling and prostrating has [in fact] not prayed."⁶¹

(4) Qawmah

When the Prophet (sws) would rise after kneeling, he would stand up straight such that his spine would come back to its original position.⁶² Generally, he would

Khuzaymah al-Nīsabūrī, *Sahīh*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-islāmī, 1992), 233-234, (no. 459); Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol. 2, 42, (no. 2317). Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 122, (no. 884).

48. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-sahīh*, 120, (nos. 736, 738); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-sahīh*, 165, (no. 865); Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 190, (no. 726); Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 122, (no. 881).

49. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-sahīh*, 120, (no. 737); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-sahīh*, 165, (no. 861).

50. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-sahīh*, 120, (no. 739).

51. Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 150, (no. 1086).

52. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 191, (no. 730); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 466-467, (no. 862).

53. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-sahīh*, 170, (no. 896); Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 198, (no. 759).

54. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-sahīh*, 170, (no. 896); Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 123, (no. 890).

55. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-sahīh*, 170, (no. 896)..

56. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-sahīh*, 134, (no. 828); Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 192-193, (no. 734).

57. Ahmād ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 3, 336, (no. 10420).

58. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 192-193, (no. 734).

59. Ibid.

60. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-sahīh*, 204-205, (no. 1110); Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 191, (no. 730).

61. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 224, (no. 855), Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 142, (no. 1028); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 470-471, (nos. 870, 871).

62. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-sahīh*, 134, (no. 828).

stand for the same amount of time as he would kneel but sometimes would stand for longer periods of time giving the impression that he had forgotten to proceed for the next ritual.⁶³ He would remark: “A person’s prayer would not merit God’s attention who while rising after kneeling does not straighten his back and goes into prostration.”⁶⁴

(5) Prostration

When the Prophet (sws) would go into prostration, he would join his fingers and spread his palms.⁶⁵ The fingers would face the *ka’bah*⁶⁶ and the hands would be placed adjacent to the shoulders and sometimes in front of the ears⁶⁷ and so far apart that a baby-goat could pass below them.⁶⁸ He would also keep apart his arms from his body to the extent that a person sitting behind him could see the whiteness of his arm pits.⁶⁹ He would place his feet upright,⁷⁰ and would turn the fingers of his feet in the direction of the *ka’bah*.⁷¹ At one instance, joining both heels is also mentioned.⁷² He would say: “I have been directed to prostrate through my forehead, nose, both hands, both knees and the fore-feet.”⁷³

(6) Jalsah

In between the two prostrations, the Prophet (sws) would spread his left foot and composedly sit on it.⁷⁴ He would use up almost equal time in *jalsah*, prostration and *qawmah*;⁷⁵ however, sometimes, like *qawmah*, he would sit in the *jalsah* for a long time giving the impression that he had forgotten to proceed.⁷⁶ It has also been reported that sometimes instead of standing up straight after the second prostration, he would sit down and then stand up for the next *rak’at*.⁷⁷

63. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 129, (no. 800); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 197, (no. 1060).

64. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 3, 336, (no. 10420).

65. Abū Bakr ‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Shaybah, *Al-Muṣannaf fī al-ahādīth wa al-athār*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmīyyah, 2005), 237, (no. 2716).

66. Ibid., vol. 1, 236-237, (nos. 2712, 2716).

67. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 192-193, (no. 734); Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 123, (no. 890).

68. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 204, (no. 1107).

69. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 131, (no. 807); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 204, (no. 1106, 1108).

70. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 201-202, (no. 1090).

71. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 134, (no. 828).

72. Ibn Khuzaymah, *Ṣahīḥ*, vol. 1, 328, (no. 654); Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī, *Al-Iḥsān fī taqrīb Ṣahīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-ma‘rifah, 2004), 596, (no. 1933).

73. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 132, (no. 812); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 203, (no. 1099).

74. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 191-193, (nos. 730, 734).

75. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 128, (no. 792); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 196, (no. 1057).

76. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 133, (no. 821); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 197, (no. 1060).

77. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 133, (no. 823); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 191, (no. 730).

(7) Qa‘dah

The Prophet (sws) would sit in *qa‘dah* in just the same way as in *jalsah* by spreading the left foot and sitting on it.⁷⁸ The right foot would be upright⁷⁹ and he would spread his right hand on the right knee and the left one on the left knee and would raise his pointing finger.⁸⁰ He would do this by coiling all the other fingers and placing his thumb on the centre finger and sometimes would make a circle with both of them.⁸¹

In the last *rak‘at* of the prayer, he would sometimes sit in a manner that he would place his left hip on the floor and take out the left feet towards the right one.⁸²

Near the end the prayer, he would generally turn to both his right and his left.⁸³

He would complete all these rituals of the prayer with great poise and calm and would counsel people to do so as well.⁸⁴

vi. Utterances of the Prayer

Following are the various utterances of the prayer:

The prayer shall begin by saying **الله أكْبَر** (God is the greatest);

Then Sūrah Fātiḥah shall be recited during the *qiyām*, after which, according to one’s convenience, a portion from the rest of the Qur’ān shall be recited;

While going into the *rukū‘*, **الله أكْبَر** shall be pronounced;

While rising from the *rukū‘*, **سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمَدَهُ** (God heard him who expressed his gratitude to Him) shall be uttered;

While going for the prostrations and rising from them, **الله أكْبَر** shall be pronounced;

While rising from the *qa‘dah* for the *qiyām*, **الله أكْبَر** shall once again be pronounced;

At the end of the prayer, **السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللهِ وَبَرَّهُ** (peace and blessings of God be on you) shall be said;

The prayer-leader will always loudly pronounce **السَّلَامُ** and **سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمَدَهُ، الله أكْبَر**

78. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 134, (no. 828); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 191-193, (nos. 731, 734).

79. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 134, (no. 828); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 191-193, (nos. 730, 734.)

80. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 235, (no. 1307); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 192-193, (no. 734). What was the reason for this gesture? Since the Prophet (sws) has not offered any explanation for this, hence, in all probability, it was some specific ritual for him which he did not intend to initiate as a Sunnah.

81. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 235-236, (nos. 1309, 1310, 1311).

82. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 128, (no. 793); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 191-192, (nos. 730, 731).

83. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 236, (no. 1315).

84. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 128, 1151, (nos. 793, 6667); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 204-205, (no. 1110).

عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللهِ. In the first two *rak'āt* of the *maghrib* and *'ishā* prayers, and in both *rak'āt* of the *fajr*, Friday and *'īd* prayers, the recital shall be loud. The recital shall always be silent in the third *rak'āt* of *maghrib* and in the third and fourth of the *'ishā* prayer. In the *zuhr* and *'asr* prayers, the recital shall be silent in all the *rak'āt*.

These are the utterances prescribed by the *shari'ah* for the prayer. They are in Arabic, and, like the practices of the prayer, are validated by the consensus and *tawātur* (perpetual adherence) of the Muslim *ummah*. Besides these, a person can say any utterance in his own language which expresses the sovereignty of the Almighty, gratitude towards Him or is a supplication. In this regard, the sayings and preferences of the Prophet (sws) are enlisted below:

(1) During Qiyām

1. In the first *rak'āt* of the prayer, the Prophet (sws) would celebrate the praises of the Lord or say some supplication after saying the *takbīr* and before beginning the recital.

Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) would remain silent after the *takbīr* with which the prayer begins and before the recital. I asked: "May my parents be sacrificed for you, what do you say when you remain silent between the *takbīr* and the recital?" The Prophet (sws) replied: I pray:

اللَّهُمَّ بَا عِدْتَنِي وَبَيْنَ حَطَابَيَّا كَمَا بَاعَدْتَنِي بَيْنَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ اللَّهُمَّ تَقْنِي مِنْ الْخَطَابَيَا كَمَا يُنْقِنَى التَّوْبُ الْأَيْضُ مِنْ الدَّنَسِ اللَّهُمَّ اغْسِلْ حَطَابَيَّا بِالْمَاءِ وَالثَّلْجِ وَالْبَرَدِ

O Lord! Distance me from my sins the way you have distanced the east and the west from one another. O Lord! Cleanse me of my sins the way a white cloth is cleansed of dirt. O Lord! Wash my sins with water and snow and hail.⁸⁵

'Alī (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) would say the following words after the *takbīr*:

وَجَهْتُ وَجْهِي لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنْ الْمُسْرِكِينَ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحَيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ الْمَلِكُ لَإِلَهٌ إِلَّا أَنْتَ رَبِّي وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي وَاعْتَرَفْتُ بِذَنْبِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي ذُنُوبِي جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ لَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ وَاهْدِنِي لِأَحْسَنِ الْأَخْلَاقِ لَا يَهْدِي لِأَحْسَنَهَا إِلَّا أَنْتَ وَاصْرَفْ عَنِّي سَيِّئَهَا لَا يَصْرِفُ عَنِّي سَيِّئَهَا إِلَّا أَنْتَ لَكَبِيرٌ وَسَعْدِيَّكَ وَالْحَيْرُ كُلُّهُ فِي يَدِيَّكَ وَالشَّرُّ لَيْسَ إِلَيْكَ أَنَا بِكَ وَإِلَيْكَ تَبَارَكْتَ وَتَعَالَيْتَ أَسْتَغْفِرُكَ وَأَتُوَبُ إِلَيْكَ

While leaving aside everything I have faced the Creator of the heavens and the earth and I am not in any way among the polytheists. My prayer and my sacrifice, my life and my death, are all for God, Lord of the Universe. No one is

85. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīh*, 121, (no. 744).

His partner. It is this directive that I have been given, and I am the first Muslim. O God! You are the king; there is no god besides you. You are my Lord and I am your servant. I have wronged my soul and I confess my sins. So please forgive all my sins. No doubt, only You can forgive sins. Please guide me to be a morally good person and only You can guide me to this. Please dissociate me from bad morals and only You can dissociate me from these. I am in Your presence O Lord! And fully prepared to follow Your command. All good is in Your hands and evil cannot be attributed to You. I exist because of You and I have to return to You. You the Blessed One, the Almighty. I seek forgiveness from You and turn to You.⁸⁶

It is narrated by ‘Ā’ishah (rta), mother of the faithful, that the Prophet (sws) would begin the prayer with the following words:

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ وَتَعَالَى جَدُّكَ وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

Lord! Glory be to You and You possess all worthy attributes. Blessed is Your name. Exalted is Your Majesty, and there is no god except You.⁸⁷

It is also narrated by ‘Ā’ishah (rta), mother of the faithful, that the Prophet (sws) would begin the night prayer with the following words:

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ حِبَّائِيلَ وَمِيكَائِيلَ وَإِسْرَافِيلَ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ عَالَمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ أَنْتَ تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ اهْدِنِي لِمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ مِنْ الْحَقِّ يَا ذِنْكَ إِنَّكَ تَهْدِي مَنْ شَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

O God! The Lord of Gabriel, Michael and Raphael, the Creator of the Heavens and the earth, One who knows what is apparent and what is hidden, You shall decide the differences between Your servants. Please guide me with Your grace regarding all the differences which are about the truth. No doubt you guide whomsoever you want [according to Your law] to the right path.⁸⁸

Ibn ‘Abbās (rta) narrates that when the Prophet (sws) would stand in the *tahajjud* prayer, he would say the following supplication:

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ أَنْتَ فِيْمُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ لَكَ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ أَنْتَ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ أَنْتَ الْحَقُّ وَوَاعْدُكَ الْحَقُّ وَلَقَاؤُكَ حَقٌّ وَالجَنَّةُ حَقٌّ وَالنَّارُ حَقٌّ وَالنَّبِيُّونَ حَقٌّ وَمُحَمَّدٌ صَلَّى اللَّهُ

86. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 314-315, (no. 1812).

87. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 204, (no. 776).

88. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 314, (no. 1811).

عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ حَقُّ وَالسَّاعَةِ حَقُّ اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ أَسْلَمْتُ وَبِكَ آمَنْتُ وَعَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْكَ أَبْتَأْتُ وَبِكَ
خَاصَّمْتُ وَإِلَيْكَ حَاكَمْتُ فَاغْفِرْ لِي مَا قَدَّمْتُ وَمَا أَخْرَتُ وَمَا أَسْرَرْتُ وَمَا أَعْلَنْتُ أَنْتَ الْمُقْدَدُ
وَأَنْتَ الْمُؤْخَرُ لَإِلَهٍ إِلَّا أَنْتَ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللهِ

O Lord! Gratitude is for You. It is You who is instrumental in keeping the heavens and the earth and what is in between them in existence and gratitude is for You only. The sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them belongs to You and gratitude is for You. You are the light of the heavens and the earth and of those between the two and gratitude is for You. You are a certain reality, and your promise is true and meeting with You is a certainty and Your books are true and Paradise is a truth and Hell is a truth and all the prophets are true and Muhammad is true and the Day of Judgement is certain to come. O Lord! I am obedient to You and accept You and repose my trust in You and turn to You and fought with Your enemies with Your help and only to you brought my pleadings. Forgive my sins of the past and of the future done in private or in public. It is You Who sends forward and it is You Who relegates backwards. There is no god except You; power and control is only because of You.⁸⁹

There are some other prayers and supplications as well that the Prophet (sws) would read in the beginning which are found in various narratives. It is also recorded in some narratives that the Prophet (sws) was appreciative of similar words of supplication uttered by some people at the beginning of the prayer and said: “The doors of the heavens have been opened for them, and I have seen twelve angels each of them trying to outdo others to take these supplications away.”⁹⁰

2. After this, the Prophet (sws) would begin reciting Sūrah Fātiḥah with the verse: الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ⁹¹.

He is reported to have said:

A person who has not recited Sūrah Fātiḥah is as if he has not offered the prayer.⁹²

The prayer without Sūrah Fātiḥah is incomplete; it is incomplete, it is incomplete.⁹³

The Almighty says: “I have divided the prayer into two equal portions, between Myself and My servant, and My servant will be granted what he asks for in it.” When the servant says الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (gratitude is for Allah),

89. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 179-180, 1099, (nos. 1120, 6317).

90. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 243, (no. 1357).

91. Ibid., *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 204-205, (no. 1110).

92. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 123, (no. 756).

93. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 167, (no. 878).

the Almighty says: "My servant has expressed his gratitude to Me." And when the servant says: الرَّحْمَانُ الرَّحِيمُ (the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful), the Almighty replies: "My servant has praised Me." When the servant says: مَالِكُ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ (Master of the Day of Judgement), Allah says: "My servant has glorified Me." And when the servant says: إِلَيْكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِلَيْكَ نَسْتَعِنُ (You alone we worship, and You alone we call upon for help), Allah says: "This is between Me and My servant, and My servant will be granted what he asks for." And when the worshipper says: اهْدِنَا الصَّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ (set us firm on the straight path; the path of those you have blessed, not of those who have earned your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray), God says: "This is for My servant, and My servant will receive what he asks for."⁹⁴

3. The portion of the Qur'ān, he would read after Sūrah Fātiḥah would at times be lengthy, and, at others, short keeping in view the circumstances.⁹⁵ He used to say: "I would begin the prayer with the intention of offering it at length, and then I would shorten it upon hearing the voice of a child crying, thinking that his mother would be worried on these cries."⁹⁶

He would recite the Qur'ān in a slow and measured tone such that each word would be clear and distinct from the other.⁹⁷ He would advise people to recite the Qur'ān in a good and melodious voice.⁹⁸ It is evident from various narratives that he would respond to the verses of the Qur'ān. Consequently, on occasions in which a verse would ask to glorify the Almighty, he would do so,⁹⁹ on occasions of prostration he would prostrate,¹⁰⁰ seek the mercy of God on verses of mercy, and seek His refuge on verses which mention torment and punishments, and would say آمين (Amen) on the content of the supplication.¹⁰¹

He is reported to have said: "When the prayer-leader recites غير المغضوب عليهم ولا because he whose آمين is said in correspondence with the الصالين آمين of the angels, his previous sins are forgiven."¹⁰²

After the recital in the last *rak'at* of the *tahajjud* prayer, the Prophet (sws) would say various supplications.¹⁰³ They are called the supplications of *qunūt*. For this very purpose, he taught al-Hasan (rta) the following prayer:

94. Ibid.

95. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 4, 153, (no. 13289).

96. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 116, (no. 707).

97. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 7, 410, (no. 25931).

98. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1299, (no. 7527); Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 141, (no. 1017).

99. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 315-316, (no. 1814).

100. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 172-173, (nos. 1067, 1074).

101. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 315-316, (no. 1814); Abū Dā’ud, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 228-229, 244, (nos. 871, 936).

102. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 127, (no. 782); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 174, (no. 915). This refers to sins which do not relate to obligations towards one's fellow human beings or which do not require repentance, making amends or atonement.

103. Abū Dā’ud, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 65-66, (no. 1427).

اللَّهُمَّ اهْدِنِي فِيمَنْ هَدَيْتَ وَعَافِنِي فِيمَنْ تَوَكَّلْتَ وَبَارِكْ لِي فِيمَا أَعْطَيْتَ
وَقِنِي شَرًّا مَا قَضَيْتَ إِنَّكَ تَقْضِي وَلَا يُقْضَى عَلَيْكَ وَإِنَّهُ لَا يَذَلُّ مَنْ وَالْيَتَ تَبَارَكْتَ رَبَّنَا وَتَعَالَيْتَ

O Lord! Guide me by including me among those whom You have guided and give me tranquillity by including me among those whom You have given tranquillity and make me [your friend] by including me among those whom You have befriended and shower Your blessings on what you have given me, and save me from the evil of things which You have ordained for me. Indeed, it is You who decides and no one can pass judgement on You and indeed the person whom You befriend is never humiliated. Very great and very Blessed and very Majestic are You O Our Lord!¹⁰⁴

(2) While Kneeling

The Prophet (sws) forbade Muslims to recite the Qur'ān while kneeling in the prayer,¹⁰⁵ and bade them glorify the Almighty in this position instead.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, he would sometimes repeat the words سُبْحَانَ رَبِّي الْعَظِيمِ (glorious is my Lord, the majestic)¹⁰⁷ during kneeling and sometimes would say one of the following utterances:

سُبُّوحٌ قُدُّوسٌ رَبُّ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالرُّوحِ

He is free of all faults and blemishes; He is the Lord of the angels and Gabriel.¹⁰⁸

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّنَا وَبِحَمْدِكَ اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي

O God! O Lord! Glorious are You and You possess all worthy attributes. O God! Forgive Me.¹⁰⁹

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ رَكَعْتُ وَبِكَ آمَنْتُ وَلَكَ أَسْلَمْتُ وَعَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلتُ أَنْتَ رَبِّي خَشَعَ سَمْعِي وَبَصَرِي
وَلَحْمِي وَدَمِي وَعَظْمِي وَعَصْبِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

O God! I knelt before You alone and professed faith in You only and consigned myself to You alone and put my trust in You only. You are my Lord! My ears and my eyes and my blood and my meat and my bones and my muscles are in humble obedience before God, Lord of the worlds.¹¹⁰

104. Ibid., vol. 2, 64, (no. 1425).

105. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 199, (no. 1076).

106. Ibid., 199, (no. 1074).

107. Ibid., 315-316, (no. 1814).

108. Ibid., 202, (no. 1091).

109. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 128-129, (no. 794).

110. Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 145, (no. 1052).

In the *tahajjud* prayer, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said the following words as well:

سُبْحَانَ ذِي الْجَبَرُوتِ وَالْمَلَكُوتِ وَالْكَبْرِيَاءِ وَالْعَظَمَةِ

Glorious is He Who is the Controller, the Lofty and the Majestic.¹¹¹

(3) In the Qawmah

When the Prophet (sws) would rise after kneeling, he would say رَبَّنَا لَكَ الْحَمْدٌ (Lord! Gratitude is for You only) after سَمِعَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ حَمَدَهُ (and at times Lord! And gratitude is for You only) and sometimes he would add the word اللَّهُمَّ [O God!] in the beginning.¹¹² Some narratives show that he would also say the following words after رَبَّنَا وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ:

... مِلْءُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَ مِلْءُ الْأَرْضِ وَ مِلْءُ مَا شَعَّتْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ بَعْدَ أَهْلَ النَّبَاءِ وَ الْمَحْمُدُ أَحَقُّ مَا قَالَ
الْعَيْدُ وَ كُلُّنَا لَكَ عَبْدٌ اللَّهُمَّ لَا مَانِعَ لِمَا أَعْطَيْتَ وَ لَا مُعْطِيَ لِمَا مَنَعْتَ وَ لَا يَنْفَعُ ذَا الْحَدَّ مِنْكَ الْجَدُّ

... to the extent that the earth and the sky get filled with it and after that what You wish also becomes brimful. Praise and majesty are for You only [O Lord!]. You most befittingly are worthy of what Your servants have [just] said, and all of Us are Your servants. O Lord! whom You have given, no one can stop him [from receiving it], and no one can give the one whom You stop giving, and the greatness and majesty of none can save him from Your grasp.¹¹³

This addition has been reported with similar words as well,¹¹⁴ It is also narrated that once in the last *rak'at* of this prayer in the *qawmah*, the Prophet (sws) offered supplications for some people by name for a month and supplicated for the doom of some others. The manner in which this was done was that he would raise his hands and recite the supplications in a loud voice while the people behind him would be saying Amen.¹¹⁵

He is reported to have said: "Respond to the words of the prayer-leader سَمِعَ اللَّهُ because he who pronounces these words in unison with the angels, his previous sins are forgiven."¹¹⁶

When a Companion (rta) of the Prophet (sws) added the words حَمْدًا كَثِيرًا طَيِّبًا

111. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 229, (no. 873).

112. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 128-129, (nos. 789, 795, 796).

113. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 198, (no. 1071).

114. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 199, (no. 760).

115. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 161, 692, (nos. 1002, 4088); Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 69, (no. 1443); Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 3, 598, (no. 11994).

116. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 129, (no. 796). This refers to sins which do not relate to obligations towards one's fellow human beings or which do not require repentance, making amends or atonement.

(heaps of gratitude which is pure and blessed), he commented: “I have seen more than thirty angels trying to outdo each other to write these words.”¹¹⁷

(4) During Prostrations

The Prophet (sws) has also forbidden Muslims to recite the Qur’ān during prostrations¹¹⁸ – just as he has done so during kneeling, and has said that since during a prostration a person comes closest to his Lord, he should say as much supplications as he can.¹¹⁹ Consequently, words سُبْحَانَ رَبِّ الْأَعْلَى (glorious is my Lord, the greatest) have been reported to be recited by him during prostration,¹²⁰ and some other words also have been reported in place of these.

Of these, the ones which are mentioned in various narratives are the following:

سُبُّوحٌ قُدُّوسٌ رَبُّ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالرُّوْحِ

Above is He from all blemishes and shortcomings, the Lord of Gabriel and the angels.¹²¹

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّنَا وَبِحَمْدِكَ اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي

O God! O Lord! Glory be to You our Lord and You possess all worthy attributes. O God! Forgive me.¹²²

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي ذَنْبِي كُلَّهُ دُقَهُ وَجِلَهُ وَأَوَّلَهُ وَآخِرَهُ وَعَلَانِيَّهُ وَسِرَّهُ

O God! Forgive all my sins – small and big, of the past and of the future, done openly or secretly.¹²³

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ سَجَدْتُ وَبِكَ آمَّتُ وَلَكَ أَسْلَمْتُ سَجَدَ وَجْهِي لِلَّذِي خَلَقَهُ وَصَوَرَهُ وَشَقَّ سَمْعَهُ
وَبَصَرَهُ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ

O God! I prostrated for You only and professed faith in You alone and gave up myself to You only. My face is in prostration for He who created it and designed it and then made in it ears and eyes. Very great and very benevolent is God, the best of Creators.¹²⁴

In the *tahajjud* prayer, the following supplications are also reported:

117. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 129, (no. 799).

118. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 199, (no. 1076).

119. Ibid., 200, (no. 1083).

120. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 315-316, (no. 1814); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 228, (no. 871).

121. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 202, (no. 1091).

122. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 128-129, (no. 794).

123. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 200, (no. 1084).

124. Ibid., 314-315, (no. 1812).

سُبْحَانَكَ وَبِحَمْدِكَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

Glory be to You, and You possess all worthy attributes. There is no God but you.¹²⁵

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي مَا أَسْرَرْتُ وَمَا أَعْلَمْتُ

O God! Forgive all my sins done secretly or openly.¹²⁶

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِرِضَاكَ مِنْ سَخْطِكَ وَبِمُعَاافَاتِكَ مِنْ عُقوَبَتِكَ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ لَا أُحْصِي شَاءَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَنْتَتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ

O Lord! I seek safe refuge with your pleasure from Your displeasure and with Your safety from Your torment! And [O Lord] I seek Your refuge from You. It is not possible for me to praise You of which You are worthy. You are exactly as You have praised Yourself.¹²⁷

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ فِي قَلْبِي نُورًا وَفِي سَمْعِي نُورًا وَفِي بَصَرِي نُورًا وَعَنْ يَمِينِي نُورًا وَعَنْ شِمَالِي نُورًا وَأَمَامِي نُورًا وَخَلْفِي نُورًا وَفَوْقِي نُورًا وَتَحْتِي نُورًا وَاجْعَلْنِي نُورًا

O Lord! Create light in my heart, and create light in my ears and my eyes, and create light on my right and on my left, and create light in front of me and behind me, and create light over me and below me, and [O Lord!] make me an embodiment of light.¹²⁸

(5) During the Jalsah

The Prophet (sws) has also supplicated while sitting in between prostrations. Consequently, it is reported that he used to repeat the words (رَبُّ اغْفِرْ لِي) (O Lord! Forgive me)¹²⁹ in this position.

(6) During the Qa‘dah

The *qa‘dah* of the prayer is reserved for supplications, and a person can say whatever supplication he wants to. The guidance provided by the practice of the Prophet (sws) in this regard is detailed out below:

1. ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd (rta) says that when we would pray with the Prophet (sws), we would say: ‘Peace be to God from His servants and peace be to such and such persons.’ When the Prophet (sws) heard this, he said: ‘Don’t say: ‘Peace be to God,’ for God Himself is entirely peace. Say this instead: التَّحَيَّاتُ لِلَّهِ وَالصَّلَوَاتُ وَالطَّيَّاتُ’

125. Ibid., 201, (no. 1089).

126. Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 155, (no. 1125).

127. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 201-202, (no. 1090).

128. Ibid., 311, (no. 1794).

129. Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 484, (no. 897).

(السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ السَّلَامُ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى عِبَادِ اللَّهِ الصَّالِحِينَ) (all salutations, supplications and good deeds are for God; O Messenger of God! Peace be to you, and blessings and mercy. Peace be to us also and to all pious people too). If you say these words, your supplication will reach every person who is in the sky or is found somewhere between the sky and the earth. [He further said:] أَشْهَدُ أَنَّ لِلَّهِ إِلَيْهِ أَنَّ مُحَمَّداً عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ (I bear witness that there is no god except Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad (sws) is His servant and Messenger). After this, a person can say any supplication he wants to for himself.”¹³⁰

With slight variations, the above supplication is also reported by ‘Umar (rta), ‘Āishah (rta), ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar (rta), ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās (rta) and Abū Mūsā al-‘Ash’arī (rta).¹³¹ It is evident from the narratives that after this, the Prophet (sws) would diligently teach this supplication to his Companions (rta).¹³²

2. Abū Mas‘ūd Anṣārī (rta) narrates: “We were sitting at the place of Sa‘d ibn ‘Ubādah (rta). When the Prophet (sws) came over, Bashīr ibn Sa‘d (rta) asked: ‘O Messenger of God! God has directed us to send blessings on you; please let us know how we should do this?’ At this, the Prophet (sws) kept silent and we wished that he had not asked this question. He then said: ‘You should say:

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَمَا صَلَيْتَ عَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَبَارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى
آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ

O God! Be merciful to Muhammad and his clan the way you have been merciful to Abraham’s clan and send Your blessings on Muhammad and his clan the way you have sent Your blessings on Abraham’s clan in this whole world. Indeed, You are great and possess all worthy attributes.”” [Then said:] “You already know the manner to wish peace for me.”¹³³

There are some variations in the words of this supplication; however, by and large, the theme is the same. It is also narrated that the Prophet (sws) has said about the *durūd*: “A person who sends mercy on me once, the Almighty will send mercy on him ten times.”¹³⁴

The Qur’ānic directive referred to in the narrative is:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلِّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُوْا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا (٥٦:٣٣)
Indeed, God and His angels send mercy on the Prophet; send mercy on him

130. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 135, (no. 835); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 170-171, (no. 897).

131. Mālik ibn Anas, *Al-Mu’atṭā*, (nos. 246-249); Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 135, (no. 831); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 170-172, (nos. 897, 902, 904); Abū Dā’ud, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 253, (no. 971), Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 1, 259-261, (nos. 2982-2997).

132. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 171, (no. 903).

133. Ibid., 173, (no. 907).

134. Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 181, (no. 1297).

then, you who are true believers, and greet him with a worthy salutation. (33:56)

3. Other supplications which the Prophet (sws) has said in the *qa‘dah* or has urged Muslims to say are:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عَذَابِ جَهَنَّمَ وَمِنْ عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ وَمِنْ فِتْنَةِ الْمُحْيَا وَالْمُمَاتِ وَمِنْ شَرِّ فِتْنَةِ
الْمَسِيحِ الدَّجَّالِ

O God! I seek Your refuge from the torment of Hell and seek Your refuge from the torment of the grave and from the trial of life and death and from the trial of the great deceiver who will claim to be Jesus.¹³⁵

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي طُلْمًا كَثِيرًا وَلَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبُ إِلَّا أَنْتَ فَاغْفِرْ لِي مَغْفِرَةً مِنْ عِنْدِكَ
وَأَرْحَمْنِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

O God! I have wronged my soul a lot and [I know that] none except You can forgive my sins. So [O Lord!] Please forgive me through Your compassion and have mercy on me. Indeed You are Compassionate and Ever-Merciful.¹³⁶

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا عَمِلْتُ وَمِنْ شَرِّ مَا لَمْ أَعْمَلْ

O Lord! I seek Your refuge from the evil of what I have done and what I have not done.¹³⁷

اللَّهُمَّ بِعِلْمِكَ الْعَيْبَ وَقُدْرَتِكَ عَلَى الْعَلْقَنِ أَحِينِي مَا عَلِمْتَ الْحَيَاةَ خَيْرًا لِي وَتَوَفَّنِي إِذَا عَلِمْتَ الْوَفَاءَ
خَيْرًا لِي اللَّهُمَّ وَأَسْأَلُكَ حَشْيَتَكَ فِي الْعَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ وَأَسْأَلُكَ كَلْمَةَ الْحَقِّ فِي الرَّضَا وَالْعَصْبَ
وَأَسْأَلُكَ الْقَصْدَ فِي الْفَقْرِ وَالْغَنَى وَأَسْأَلُكَ نَعِيْمًا لَا يَنْفَدُ وَأَسْأَلُكَ قُرَّةَ عَيْنٍ لَا تَنْقَطِعُ وَأَسْأَلُكَ الرَّضَاءَ
بَعْدَ الْقَضَاءِ وَأَسْأَلُكَ بَرْدَ الْعَيْشِ بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ وَأَسْأَلُكَ لَذَّةَ النَّظَرِ إِلَى وَجْهِكَ وَالشَّوْقَ إِلَى لِقَائِكَ فِي
غَيْرِ ضَرَاءٍ مُضَرَّةٍ وَلَا فِتْنَةَ مُضْلِلَةَ اللَّهُمَّ زِينَا بِزِيَّةِ الْإِيمَانِ وَاجْعَلْنَا هُدَاءَ مُهْدِينَ

O Lord! Through the help of Your knowledge of the unknown and Your power over Your Creation give me life till the time You deem it appropriate for me, and take me away from this world when You deem it appropriate for me. O God! And I seek humility towards You in open and in private, and want to be guided to the truth in happiness and in sorrow and request You to make me a balanced person between poverty and richness and want a blessing which will never finish and the contentment of the eyes which will never cease, and seek

135. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 221, (no. 1377).

136. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 135, (no. 834); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 1175-1176, (no. 6869).

137. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 1179-1180, (no. 6895).

the courage to be happy at Your decisions and seek the serenity of life after death, and seek from You the fondness of meeting You and the joy of seeing You in a manner that I do not remain in hardships which are harmful and in a trial which lead [a person] astray. O God! Please grant us the grace of faith, and make us such that we ourselves remain among the guided and are instrumental in providing guidance to others.¹³⁸

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ كُلِّهِ عَاجِلَهُ وَآجِلَهُ مَا عَلِمْتُ مِنْهُ وَمَا لَمْ أَعْلَمْ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنِ الشَّرِّ
 كُلِّهِ عَاجِلَهُ وَآجِلَهُ مَا عَلِمْتُ مِنْهُ وَمَا لَمْ أَعْلَمْ وَأَسْأَلُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَا قَرَبَ إِلَيْهَا مِنْ قَوْلٍ أَوْ عَمَلٍ
 وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنِ النَّارِ وَمَا قَرَبَ إِلَيْهَا مِنْ قَوْلٍ أَوْ عَمَلٍ وَأَسْأَلُكَ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ مَا سَأَلْتَكَ عَبْدُكَ
 وَرَسُولُكَ مُحَمَّدًا صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَأَسْتَعِذُكَ مِمَّا اسْتَعَاذَكَ مِنْهُ عَبْدُكَ وَرَسُولُكَ مُحَمَّدًا صَلَّى
 اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَأَسْأَلُكَ مَا قَضَيْتَ لِي مِنْ أَمْرٍ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ عَاقِبَتَهُ رُشْدًا

O God! I seek from You goodness of every sort – that which is to be given to me in the immediate future and that also which is to be given at the time You have appointed for it, that also which I know and that also which I do not. I seek refuge with You from every kind of evil – the one which may befall soon and also for which You have appointed a time, that which I know and that also which I have no knowledge of and I seek Paradise from You and the urge to have beliefs and do deeds which will take me near it. And I seek refuge with You from Hell from beliefs and deeds which take me near it. [Lord!] I seek goodness from You – the goodness which Your servant and Messenger Muhammad intended, and seek Your refuge from things from which Your servant and Messenger has sought refuge. And whatever decision You have made for me, I seek from You a good fate in it.¹³⁹

It is narrated by ‘Alī (rta) that in the *qa‘dah* the Prophet (sws) would generally say the following supplication at the end:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِي مَا قَدَّمْتُ وَمَا أَخْرَتُ وَمَا أَعْلَمْتُ وَمَا أَسْرَفْتُ وَمَا أَنْتَ أَعْلَمُ بِهِ مِنِّي
 أَنْتَ الْمُقْدِمُ وَأَنْتَ الْمُؤَخِّرُ لِإِلَهٍ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O God! Forgive my sins of the past and of the future done in private or in public. And also forgive whatever excesses I have committed and all those things also which You know more than I know. It is You Who sends forward and it is You Who relegates backwards. There is no god except You.¹⁴⁰

Wā'il (rta) narrates that sometimes the Prophet (sws) would add the word (السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ) (peace be to you and the mercy

138. Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 183, (no. 1306).

139. Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 7, 211, (no. 24613).

140. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 314-315, (no. 1812).

of God) when he would say *salām* on the right side.¹⁴¹

(7) After the Prayer

After finishing the prayer also, the Prophet (sws) would say various supplications and remember the Almighty.¹⁴²

Ibn ‘Abbās (rta) narrates: “Upon hearing ^{الله أكْبَرْ} I would come to know that the Prophet (sws) had ended his prayer.”¹⁴³

Ā’ishah (rta) says that after saying the *salām*, the Prophet (sws) would sit for just enough time so as to say:

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ السَّلَامُ وَمِنْكَ السَّلَامُ تَبَارَكْتَ يَا ذَا الْحَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ

O God! You are peace in entirety and all peace is from You. O Possessor of respect and honour! You are blessed.¹⁴⁴

Thaw‘bān (rta) says that before saying the above prayer, he would ask for the forgiveness of the Almighty three times.¹⁴⁵

Mughīrah ibn Shu‘bah (rta) reports that the Prophet (sws) would say the following supplication after the prayer:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ اللَّهُمَّ لَا مَانِعَ لِمَا أَعْصَيْتَ وَلَا مُعْطِيَ لِمَا مَنَعْتَ وَلَا يَنْتَعِ ذَا الْجَدْدُ مِنْكَ الْجَدُّ

There is no god except Allah. He is one of His kind and no one is His partner. Sovereignty is His and all glorification and gratitude is for Him, and He has power over all things. O Lord! Whom You give, no one can stop him [from receiving it], and no one can give the one whom You stop giving, and the greatness and majesty of none can stop You to grasp [someone].¹⁴⁶

‘Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr (rta) reports that the Prophet (sws) would recite the following supplication right after the prayer:

141. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 260, (no. 997). Abū Ya‘lā Ahmad ibn ‘Alī, *Musnad*, 1st ed., vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 2002), 364, (no. 5756); Abū al-Qāsim Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Mu‘jam al-awsat*, 1st ed., vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1999), 217, (no. 5768).

142. This refers to supplications and remembrance by the prayer-leader in his personal capacity and not in the collective one in which he is seconded by the followers by the word: Amen.

143. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 136, (no. 842); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 236, (no. 1316).

144. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 239, (no. 1335).

145. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 239, (no. 1334); Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr*, vol. 1, 331, (no. 300).

146. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1101, (no. 6330).

لَإِلَهٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ لَإِلَهٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَا تَعْبُدُ إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ لَهُ التَّعْمَةُ وَلَهُ الْفَضْلُ وَلَهُ الشَّاءُ الْحَسَنُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ وَلَوْ كَرِهُ الْكَافِرُونَ

There is no god except Allah. He is one of His kind and no one is His partner. Sovereignty is His and all glorification and gratitude is for Him, and He has power over all things. Power and strength – all are a blessing from Him. There is no god except Allah and we worship Him only. Favours and blessings are from Him and befitting glorification is for Him only. There is no god except Allah. Obedience is purely for Him even though the disbelievers dislike this.¹⁴⁷

It is reported that Sa'd (rta) used to teach these words to his children and would say that after every prayer, the Prophet (sws) would seek refuge with the Almighty through these words:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنِ الْبُخْلِ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنِ الْجُنُبِ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أُرَدَّ إِلَى أَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ فِتْنَةِ الدُّنْيَا وَعَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ

O God! I seek Your refuge from miserliness and cowardice and seek Your refuge from going to old age and seek Your refuge from the trial of life and from the torment in the graves.¹⁴⁸

It is narrated by Abū Hurayrah (rta) that the Prophet (sws) instructed the poor among the Companions (rta) who belonged to the *muhājirūn* to recite سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ (glory be to God), أَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ (gratitude is for God), (God is the greatest) 33 times each after the prayer.¹⁴⁹

Abū Hurayrah (rta) also narrates that if after the above 99 words the following 100th words are said, then the sins of a person are forgiven even if they equal the foam of the sea:

لَإِلَهٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

There is no god except Allah. He is one of His kind and no one is His partner. Sovereignty is His and all gratitude is for Him, and He has power over all things.¹⁵⁰

In a narrative of Ibn 'Ujrah, it is reported that سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ should be said 33 times,

147. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-sahīḥ*, 240, (no. 1343); Al-Nasā'i, *Sunan*, 188, (no. 1339).

148. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-sahīḥ*, 467-468, 1109, (nos. 2822, 6390).

149. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-sahīḥ*, 136-137, (no. 843); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-sahīḥ*, 241, (no. 1347).

150. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-sahīḥ*, 242, (no. 1352).

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ should be said 33 times and should be said 34 times.¹⁵¹

It is narrated by Zayd ibn Thābit (rta) that a person from the Anṣār told the Prophet (sws) that in a dream someone told him to recite 25 سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ 25 times, 25 لِّإِلَهٍ مِّنْ إِلَهٍ أَكْبَرٌ 25 times, 25 لِّإِلَهٍ إِلَهٌ أَكْبَرٌ 25 times and 25 لِّإِلَهٍ إِلَهٌ أَكْبَرٌ 25 times. The Prophet said: "Do so."¹⁵²

vii. Prayer Timings

It is incumbent upon the Muslims to pray five times a day. The time of each prayer is as follows:

fajr, zuhr, 'asr, maghrib and 'ishā.

When the whiteness of the dawn emerges from the darkness of the night, then this is *fajr*.

When the sun starts to descend from midday, then this is *zuhr*.

When the sun descends below the line of sight, then this is '*asr*.

The time of sunset is *maghrib*.

When the redness of dusk disappears, this is '*ishā*.

The time of *fajr* remains till sunrise, the time of *zuhr* remains till '*asr* begins, the time of '*asr* remains till *maghrib*, the time of *maghrib* remains till '*ishā* and the time of '*ishā* remains till midnight. The times of sunrise and sunset are prohibited for praying since the sun used to be worshiped at these times. Like the rituals and utterances of the prayer, these prayer timings have also been transmitted to us through the consensus and perpetual adherence of the *ummah*. These timings have remained the same during the era of other prophets as well. The Qur'ān while referring to these timings at various places says:

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَرُونَافًا مِّنَ الظَّلَلِ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُدْهِنُ الْسَّيِّئَاتِ ذَلِكَ ذِكْرٌ لِلَّذِاكْرِينَ

(114:11)

And diligently attend to your prayer in both parts of the day and in some part of the night too because good deeds make amends for sins. This is a reminder for those who want to be reminded. (11:114)

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِلْذُكُورِ الشَّمْسُ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا وَمِنَ الظَّلَلِ فَتَهَجَّدُ بِهِ تَاهَقَّلَ لَكَ عَسَى أَنْ يَعْتَثَكَ رَبِّكَ مَقَامًا مَحْمُودًا (17: 78 - 79)

Diligently attend to your prayers from the time of the sun's descent to nightfall, and especially the recital in the *fajr* prayer because the *fajr* prayer is in the presence [of the Almighty]. And get up in this manner at night also [for the prayer]; this is an additional duty upon you on the fulfilment of which your Lord hopefully may elevate you [on the Day of Judgement] to an honourable status. (17:78-79)

151. Ibid., 242, (no. 1349).

152. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 6, 235, 244, (nos. 21150, 21090).

وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا وَمِنْ آناءِ اللَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَأَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضَى (٢٠:١٣٠)

And give glory to your Lord and praise Him before sunrise and before sunset and [in a similar manner], glorify Him at night and at the two sides of the day also so that you may become happy. (20:130)

فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ حِينَ تُمْسُونَ وَحِينَ تُصْبِحُونَ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَعَشِيًّا وَحِينَ ظَهَرُونَ (٣٠:١٧-١٨)

Therefore give glory to God evening and morning and [know that] praise is showered on Him in the heavens and the earth, and [glorify him] at the time of ‘ishā and of zuhr. (30:17-18)

وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ الْغُرُوبِ وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ وَأَدْبَارَ السُّجُودِ (٥٠:٣٩-٤٠)

And give glory to your Lord and praise Him before sunrise and before sunset and give glory to Him at some time of the night, and also after the sun’s prostrations. (50:39-40)

The details of the guidance provided by the knowledge and practice of the Prophet (sws) in this regard are as follows:

1. He would generally offer the *fajr* prayer in the darkness of night. Thus it has been reported that when women wrapped in their cloaks would return from the mosque after the *fajr* prayer, they could not be recognized.¹⁵³

2. He has asked the Muslims to refrain from the *zuhr* prayer at midday and told them that this is the time when Hell is sizzling hot.¹⁵⁴ He would generally ask people to offer this prayer in summers when the heat would lessen.¹⁵⁵

3. He would offer the ‘*aṣr*’ prayer when the sun would be high and fully shining.¹⁵⁶

4. He would offer the *maghrib* prayer early and would offer the ‘*ishā*’ prayer late. It has been reported that he would dislike sleeping before ‘*ishā*’ and sitting up and talking once it had been offered.¹⁵⁷

5. If one *rak‘at* of a prayer has been offered before its time ends, it is his directive that the prayer should be completed and it shall be considered as being offered on

153. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 96, (no. 578); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 259, (no. 1458).

154. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 234-236, (no. 1930).

155. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 90, (no. 533); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 249, (no. 1397).

156. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 92, (no. 550); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 251, (no. 1408).

157. Abū Dā‘ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 111-112, (nos. 416, 417, 418, 422); Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr*, vol. 1, 209, (no. 167); Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 124-125, (no. 771).

time. Consequently, it has been narrated that he said that a person who offers one *rak'at* of *fajr* before sunrise and one *rak'at* of *'asr* before sunset, he should rest assured that these prayers have been offered on time.¹⁵⁸ He is also reported to have said that if a person sleeps then it is not his fault if he misses the prayer; however, if a person leaves a prayer while being awake, then he is certainly at fault. Therefore, if anyone forgets to offer the prayer or is asleep at the time of prayer, he should offer it as soon as he realizes it.¹⁵⁹

6. The Prophet (sws) has emphasized that a Muslim must vigilantly observe the time which is prohibited for the prayer. Consequently, he is reported to have said that after the *fajr* prayer no one should pray until sunrise and after the *'asr* prayer no one should pray until sunset.¹⁶⁰

7. The Prophet (sws) has said that if a ruler delays the prayer, Muslims should pray themselves and then later join him in congregation.¹⁶¹

A little deliberation would show that these prayer timings are in the words of Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī very apt for worship, conducive for a supplication, soothing for the mind of a believer, harmonious with the worship done by the elements of nature and congruous with the prostrations of the sun and the moon, the trees and the stones. He writes:

The time of *fajr* is a very special time in which a person is mentally free and is peaceful at heart. When a person gets up at this time after resting at night, his heart is very serene. A new step is taken for worship and a new initiative is required at this time and this new initiative requires new resolve and guidance from the Almighty.

The *zuhr* time signals another reality. If a person has a keen eye, he witnesses this reality which urges a person to kneel and prostrate before the Almighty: The sun which the naïve have regarded as a deity bows before the Almighty at this time and through this practice declares that it is a creation and not the creator, a worshipper and not the worshiped.

The time of *'asr* proclaims another reality: for every crest there is a fall, for every zenith there is a nadir and for every youth there is old age. Nothing is an exception to this rule. There is only one Being Who is immortal. No one except Him lives forever. Just as when the day shone with brightness, then passed through its afternoon and now stands near its closure, similarly this world was created, will reach its bloom and shall one day die away. At the time of *'asr*, it is this silent reminder of the Day of Judgement which urges a person to

158. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 245-246, (no. 1374); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 234-236, (no. 1930).

159. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 99, (no. 597); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 276-278, (nos. 1562, 1566); Al-Nasa’ī, *Sunan*, 84, (no. 616).

160. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 97, (no. 586); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 333, (no. 1921).

161. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 260, (no. 1465).

prostrate before his Lord to seek His mercy and forgiveness.

At the time of *maghrib*, life enters a new door: this door is similar to the door between life and death and between life and *barzakh*. The schemer of this world unveils the sign of the night after the sign of the day and the light of the moon after the brightness of the sun. The hectic routine of life starts to cease and the stars come out. The heat and humidity of the day begins to vanish and the worn out and fatigued man experiences the coolness of night. The senseless and the naïve might not feel this tremendous change, but how can the sane and sensible remain unaware of it. How then is it possible that a person remain indifferent to such a display of power and wisdom by a Powerful and Wise Being. If his heart has any life in it, he would definitely be responsive to this change and bow down before his Creator – the Creator whose might was such that within seconds He transformed the day into night.

The time of *'ishā* is the time of accountability. The darkness of night now totally confines activity. A person relishes the rest and comfort of the night so that he can once again be fresh for the next day. This time is the most appropriate for a person to once again remember His Lord before going to bed. This may be his last time and he may never get up after this sleep.¹⁶²

viii. Rak‘at of the Prayer

The *rak‘at* of the prayer which have been fixed by the *shari‘ah* are:

fajr: two

zuhr: four

'asr: four

maghrib: three

'ishā: four

These are the obligatory *rak‘at* of each of these prayers, leaving which a person would be held accountable on the Day of Judgement. Thus, they must necessarily be offered except in cases when *qaṣr* has been permitted. All other *rak‘at* apart from them are optional; they earn great reward for a person but will not hold him accountable on the Day of Judgement if he does not offer them.

ix. Concession in the Prayer

If the time of the prayer arrives in dangerous circumstances, the Almighty has allowed a person to pray while on foot or riding in whatever way possible. In these circumstances, it is evident that there shall be no congregational prayer, facing the *qiblah* shall not be necessary, and, in some situations, it shall not be possible to offer the prayer according to the prescribed method. The Qur’ān says:

162. Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī, *Tazkiyah-i nafs*, 242-243.

فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ فَرِحَالًا أَوْ رُكْبَانًا فَإِذَا أَمْتَنْتُمْ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَمَا عَلِمْتُمْ مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا (٢٣٩:٢)

Then if you encounter danger, pray on foot or while riding; but when you are safe remember God in the manner He has taught you which you did not know. (2:239)

If such a situation arises during a journey, the Qur’ān has further said that people can shorten the prayer. In religious parlance, this is called *qasr*. The *sunnah* established by the Prophet (sws) in this regard is that the four *rak’āt* prayer shall be shortened to two. No reduction shall be made in two and three *rak’āt* prayers. Consequently, the *fajr* and the *maghrib* prayers were offered in full in such circumstances. The reason is that while the former already has two *rak’āt*, the latter is considered as the *witr* of daytime, and this status of the *maghrib* prayer cannot be changed.

In Sūrah Nisā’, this directive has been revealed in the following words:

وَإِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَا يَسِّرْ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَقْصُرُوا مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ إِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَنْ يَقْتَنِكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ كَانُوا لَكُمْ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا (٤:١٠١)

And when you travel, there is no offence for you to shorten your prayers if you fear that the disbelievers may put you through some trial because these disbelievers are your open enemies. (4:101)

The concession of shortening the prayer and that of offering it while on foot or while riding are stated in these verses with the condition: إِنْ خِفْتُمْ (if you fear). It is evident from Ahādīth that on the basis of this condition the Prophet (sws) analogously offered the *qasr* prayer when there was uneasiness and discomfort while travelling in general. He similarly offered the optional prayer while riding his camel in order to save the caravan from bother.¹⁶³ ‘Umar (rta) says that he deemed it strange for the Prophet (sws) to offer the *qasr* prayer because of uneasiness and discomfort, and therefore he asked the Prophet (sws). Upon this, he replied: “This is a favour of God upon you; so you should accept it.”¹⁶⁴

From this concession granted in the prayer, the Prophet (sws) has also deduced a concession in the times it is offered, and in such journeys he has led the Muslims in prayer by combining the *zuhra* and *‘asr* prayers together and the *maghrib* and *‘ishā* prayers together. It is narrated by Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal (rta) that in the journey undertaken by the Prophet (sws) for the battle of Tabūk he would combine the *zuhra* and *‘asr* prayers if the sun would descend before the caravan set off, and if the caravan began its journey before the sun’s descent, he would defer the *zuhra* prayer and combine it with the *‘asr* prayer. Similar was the case with the *maghrib*

163. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 177, (no. 1104); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 285, (no. 1619).

164. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 279, (nos. 1573, 1574). It is evident from this reply that this deduction of the Prophet (sws) was approved by the Almighty.

prayer. If the sun would set before the caravan set off, he would combine the *maghrib* and ‘*ishā* prayers together and if the caravan set off before sunset, he would pray the *maghrib* and ‘*ishā* prayers together at the time of ‘*ishā*.¹⁶⁵

A similar situation arose at the time the Prophet (sws) offered the *hajj*. Since in the *hajj*, the battle against Satan is symbolized through various rituals, he established the Sunnah in consideration of this symbolism that whether people are residents or outsiders, they shall shorten the prayers at Minā and shorten and combine them at Muzdalifah and ‘Arafāt.

A subtle reference to this deduction of the Prophet (sws) that prayers can be combined in such situations is found in the Qur’ān itself. The words of Sūrah Nisā on which this directive ends: إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كَتَبًا مَوْفُوتًا (because the prayer is incumbent upon the Muslims at appointed times) require that words like “and pray at the appointed times” or similar to these be understood to be present before them as per the linguistic principles of Arabic. It is evident from this understood expression that besides shortening the prayer, people can also reduce its timings. Consequently, the succeeding words are that once peace is restored Muslims should pray the full *rak‘at* and pray at the appointed times because the prayer is incumbent upon the Muslims at appointed times.

In the lifetime of the Prophet (sws), an important issue was that no Muslim could have tolerated to have been left out from a prayer that the Prophet (sws) led right in a battlefield. Every soldier desired to pray behind him. Though this was a very natural desire, it was essential that proper arrangements of defence be made in the battlefield. One solution to this problem could have been that the Prophet (sws) pray four *rak‘at* and the army be divided into half with each half praying two *rak‘at* behind him. At some instances, this solution was adopted as well.¹⁶⁶ However, to save the Prophet (sws) from difficulty that this way could have created, the Qur’ān suggested another way: the Prophet (sws) as the prayer-leader and all the soldiers should shorten their prayers and each half of the army should pray one *rak‘at* each behind the Prophet (sws) and pray the other *rak‘at* by themselves. Consequently, the first half after completing the first *rak‘at* including its prostrations should retreat and take up the task of defence and the other half should now stand behind the Prophet (sws) to pray in the Prophet’s second *rak‘at*. The Qur’ān says:

وَإِذَا كُنْتَ فِيهِمْ فَأَقِمْتَ لَهُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَلْتَقْعُمْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا أَسْلَحَتَهُمْ فَإِذَا سَجَدُوا فَلْيَكُونُوا مِنْ وَرَائِكُمْ وَلْتَأْتِ طَائِفَةٌ أُخْرَى لَمْ يُصْلُوْا فَلْيَصُلُّوا مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا حِذْرَهُمْ وَأَسْلَحَتَهُمْ وَدَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ تَعْفُلُونَ عَنْ أَسْلَحَتِكُمْ وَأَمْتَعْتُكُمْ فَيَمْلُوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَيْلَةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ بِكُمْ أَذْى مِنْ مَطَرًا أَوْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَى أَنْ تَضَعُوا أَسْلَحَتَكُمْ وَخُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعْدَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ قِيمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَى جُنُوبِكُمْ فَإِذَا

165. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 287, (no. 1631); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 7-8, (no. 1220).

166. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 340, (no. 1950).

اَطْمَانُتُمْ فَاقِيْمُوا الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْفُوتًا (٤: ١٠٢ - ١٠٣)

And [O Prophet (sws)!] when you are among them, and stand to lead them in the prayer [in a battlefield], then let one group stand behind you such that they are armed with their weapons. Then after making their prostration, let them withdraw to the rear and then let the other group who have yet to pray come forward and pray with you; and let these also be armed with their weapons. These disbelievers desire that if you even slightly desert your arms and your gear, they attack you united together. But it is no offence for you to put aside your weapons if you are inflicted with heavy rain or are stricken with an illness, though you should still take necessary protection and you should be certain that God has prepared a humiliating punishment for the disbelievers. So when the prayer you have offered in such a manner ends, remember God standing, sitting and lying down [in whatever circumstances you are in]. So when the circumstances become peaceful, offer the full prayer, [and, for this, pray at the appointed times] for the prayer is incumbent on the believers at the appointed times. (4:102-103)

It is evident from the narratives that various ways were adopted to offer the *rak‘at* which each half of the army had to offer on its own as per this directive. At one instance, the Prophet (sws) waited until those behind him completed their *rak‘at* and then withdrew¹⁶⁷ and at another the army later completed the *rak‘at*.¹⁶⁸ There remains no need to state the details of this because this measure, as is evident from the words *وَإِذَا كُنْتَ فِيهِمْ* (when you are among them), related to the presence of the Prophet (sws). After him, neither can the desire to pray behind one prayer-leader be as strong nor as important. Today, if there does arise a possibility of congregational prayers in such circumstances, then soldiers can easily pray behind different prayer-leaders.

x. The Congregational Prayer

Although the prayer can be offered alone, yet the *sunnah* of the religion of the prophets has always been that for the purification of the collectivity, it be offered in congregation and if possible in a place of worship. For this very purpose, the Prophet (sws) built a mosque as soon as he reached Madīnah and with this the practice of building mosques in all localities and settlements of Muslims was initiated. These mosques can now be observed all over the world. Islam has not fixed a specific form for their construction. Yet Muslims, with a few differences, have generally maintained a uniform structure for them. In the lifetime of the Prophet (sws), it was essential for all those who heard the *adhān* to come to the mosque. Later, when the truth had been fully communicated to the people of

167. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 699, (no. 4129); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 339, (no. 1947).

168. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 151, (no. 942); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 338, (no. 1942).

Arabia by the Prophet (sws) and these people became guilty of deliberate denial and various measures were taken to isolate the Muslims from the Hypocrites, a blind person once asked relief from the Prophet (sws) in coming to the mosque, he was at first given the permission; then the Prophet (sws) asked him: “Do you hear the voice of the *adhān*? ” When he answered in the affirmative, the Prophet (sws) said that he would then have to come to the mosque.¹⁶⁹ On this very occasion, the Prophet (sws) warned people: “I would like to burn the houses of those who do not come for the prayer, and would like to have them thrown over these people.”¹⁷⁰ It is narrated by Ibn Mas‘ūd (rta) that even the sick in those times would come to the congregational prayer by limping on the shoulders of two people.¹⁷¹ Obviously, after the departure of the Prophet (sws), the directive of coming to the mosques for the congregational prayer is not incumbent upon the Muslims; however, this is a highly rewarding practice earning the blessings of the Almighty. Thus a Muslim should not deprive himself of this without any valid reason.

The narratives ascribed to the Prophet (sws) in this regard are the following:

The congregational prayer is twenty seven times more rewarding than the individual prayer.¹⁷²

If people knew how highly rewarding reaching the mosque at the time of the *adhān* is and standing in the first row is, and if for this they had to cast lots, they would have done this. And if they knew the reward of outdoing others for the *zuhra* prayer, they would have done so. And if they knew the reward for the *fajr* and *‘ishā* prayer they would have reached [the mosque] even if they had to drag themselves for this.¹⁷³

A person who prayed the *‘ishā* prayer in congregation is like a person who stood [for worship] till midnight and a person who prayed the *fajr* prayer in congregation is like a person who spent the whole night standing [in worship].¹⁷⁴

Women, however, are exempted from this directive. For them the *sunnah* is that they can come to the mosque for the prayer but the prayer offered at home is better for them. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: “Do not stop your women from coming to the mosque, but they should know that it is more appropriate for them to pray at home.”¹⁷⁵

Following is the way which has been prescribed by the *shari‘ah* for offering the congregational prayer.

169. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 623, (no. 1486).

170. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 106, (no. 644); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 263, (no. 1481).

171. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 264, (no. 1488).

172. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 106, (no. 645); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 262, (no. 1477).

173. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 107, (nos. 653, 654); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 185, (no. 981).

174. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 264, (no. 1491).

175. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 140-141, (nos. 865, 873); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 186, (no. 990); Ibn Khuzaymah, *Ṣahīḥ*, vol. 3, 92, (no. 1683).

1. Before this prayer, the *adhān* shall be called so that people are able to join the prayer after hearing this call. The words which the Prophet (sws) has prescribed for the *adhān* are:

الله أَكْبَرُ، أَشْهُدُ أَن لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، أَشْهُدُ أَن مُحَمَّداً رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، حَيٌّ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ، حَيٌّ عَلَى
الْفَلَاحِ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ؛ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

God is the greatest; I bear witness that there is no god besides Him; I bear witness that Muhammad is God's Messenger; Come towards the prayer; come towards salvation; God is the greatest; there is no god besides Him.

2. If there is only one follower, he will stand adjacent to the *imām* on his right side and if there are many followers, they shall stand behind him and he shall stand in the centre ahead of them.

3. The *iqāmah* shall be called before the prayer begins. All the words of the *adhān* shall be uttered in it; however, after the words حَيٌّ عَلَى الْفَلَاحِ shall be said by the person who says the *iqāmah*.

4. The words of the *adhān* and the *iqāmah* can be repeated more than once for the purpose they are said.

This method of the congregational prayer has been given to us through the *ummah*'s consensus and perpetual adherence. The details of this method which are mentioned in various narratives are presented below:

(1) The *Adhān*

According to a dream seen by the Companions (rta) regarding the *adhān* mentioned in various narratives and as per which the Prophet (sws) directed them to say the *adhān* and the *iqāmah*, the words of the *adhān* have been repeated in the following manner:¹⁷⁶

الله أَكْبَرُ، الله أَكْبَرُ، الله أَكْبَرُ؛ أَشْهُدُ أَن لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، أَشْهُدُ أَن لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ؛
أَشْهُدُ أَن مُحَمَّداً رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، أَشْهُدُ أَن مُحَمَّداً رَسُولَ اللَّهِ؛ حَيٌّ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ، حَيٌّ عَلَى
الصَّلَاةِ؛ حَيٌّ عَلَى الْفَلَاحِ، حَيٌّ عَلَى الْفَلَاحِ؛ اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ، اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ؛ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

Thus it has been reported that in the times of the Prophet (sws), the words of *adhān* were generally repeated twice.¹⁷⁷

Abū Ma‘dūrah reports that when the Prophet (sws) taught him the *adhān*, he said: You should say:

176. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 132-133, (no. 499).

177. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 100-101, (no. 605); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 161, (no. 838).

178. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 134, (no. 503).

الله أَكْبَرُ ، الله أَكْبَرُ ، الله أَكْبَرُ ؛ أَشْهَدُ أَن لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الله ، أَشْهَدُ أَن لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الله ؛
أَشْهَدُ أَن مُحَمَّداً رَسُولَ الله ، أَشْهَدُ أَن مُحَمَّداً رَسُولَ الله

Then repeat:

أَشْهَدُ أَن لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الله ، أَشْهَدُ أَن لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الله ، أَشْهَدُ أَن مُحَمَّداً
رَسُولُ الله

Then say:

حَيٌّ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ ، حَيٌّ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ ؛ حَيٌّ عَلَى الْفَلَاحِ ، حَيٌّ عَلَى الْفَلَاحِ ؛ الله أَكْبَرُ
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الله

He also reports: “The Prophet (sws) asked me to say ‘The Prayer is better than sleep’ twice in a low tone and twice loudly. He also said that in the *fajr* prayer say: ‘الصلوة خير من النوم، الصلوة خير من النوم’ (the prayer is better than sleep) after ¹⁷⁹,¹⁸⁰ حَيٌّ عَلَى الْفَلَاحِ”

It is reported that in times of rain and severe cold the Prophet (sws) would ask the pronouncer of the *adhān* to say: أَلَا صَلُوا فِي الرَّحَامِ (People! Pray at your homes).¹⁸⁰

Similarly, it has also been narrated that in order to raise the voice and transmit it around, Bilāl (rta) would insert his fingers into his ears and turn his face right and left.¹⁸¹

‘Uthmān ibn al-‘Āṣ says: “When I asked the Prophet (sws) to grant me permission to lead the prayers, he said: ‘Appoint that person as the *mu’adhdhin* who does not charge money for saying the *adhān*.’”¹⁸²

In response to the *adhān*, the Prophet (sws) urged Muslims to repeat the words of the *mu’adhdhin* and to send blessings on the Prophet (sws). He also asked Muslims: “Pray for me that I be granted the place of nearness in Paradise because this is a place in Paradise which has been reserved for just one servant of the Almighty and I hope that I would be that one person; so whoever will pray for this will deserve my intercession.”¹⁸³

In a narrative attributed to ‘Umar (rta), it is further explained that the Prophet (sws) directed Muslims to respond to the words حَيٌّ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ and حَيٌّ عَلَى الْفَلَاحِ by

179. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 133, (no. 500); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 390, (no. 716); Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 86-87, (no. 633).

180. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 104, (no. 632); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 283, (no. 1600).

181. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 104, (no. 634); Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr*, vol. 1, 237-238, (no. 197).

182. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 143-144, (no. 531).

183. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 163, (no. 849).

saying لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللهِ (strength and power are only from God) and said that a person who responded in this manner from the depth of his heart has glad tidings of Paradise.¹⁸⁴

The supplications which are attributed to the Prophet (sws) after the *adhān* are the following:

1.

اللَّهُمَّ، رَبَّ هَذِهِ الدَّعْوَةِ التَّامَّةِ، وَالصَّلَاةِ الْقَائِمَةِ، آتِ مُحَمَّدًا الْوَسِيلَةَ وَالْفَضِيلَةَ، وَابْعُثْهُ مَقَامًا
مَحْمُودًا الَّذِي وَعَدْتَهُ

O Lord of this complete call and of the prayer which stands as its result! Bless Muhammad and grant him a rank of nearness and raise him up on the Day of Judgement in a manner that he earns the praise of the people – something which you had promised him.¹⁸⁵

2.

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ، رَضِيتُ بِاللَّهِ رَبِّيَا
وَبِمُحَمَّدٍ رَسُولًا، وَبِالإِسْلَامِ دِينًا

I bear witness that there is no Lord except God. He is the one of His kind and no one is His partner. I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger. I am happy and content that Allah is my Lord and that Muhammad is His Messenger and that Islam is my religion.¹⁸⁶

About the first supplication, the Prophet (sws) has said: “Whoever vigilantly said it, will deserve my intercession.”¹⁸⁷

About the second one, he has said: “the sins of the person who says it will be forgiven.”¹⁸⁸

(2) The *Iqāmah*

The words of the *iqāmah* were generally said once only.¹⁸⁹ The words of the *iqāmah* which have been narrated in the dream of the Companions (rta) referred to above are:¹⁹⁰

184. Ibid., 163, (no. 850).

185. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 102, (no. 614).

186. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 163, (no. 851).

187. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 102, (no. 614).

188. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 163, (no. 851). This refers to sins which do not relate to obligations towards one’s fellow human beings or which do not require repentance, making amends or atonement.

189. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 100-101, (no. 605); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 161, (no. 838).

190. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 132, (no. 499).

الله أَكْبَرُ ، الله أَكْبَرُ ؛ أَشْهَدُ أَن لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الله ، أَشْهَدُ أَن مُحَمَّداً رَسُولَ الله ، حَيٌّ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ ؛
حَيٌّ عَلَى الْفَلَاحِ ؛ قَدْ قَامَتِ الصَّلَاةُ ، قَدْ قَامَتِ الصَّلَاةُ ؛ الله أَكْبَرُ ، الله أَكْبَرُ ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الله

Abū Mahdhūrah says that the Prophet (sws) taught him the following seventeen expressions:¹⁹¹

الله أَكْبَرُ ، الله أَكْبَرُ ، الله أَكْبَرُ ، الله أَكْبَرُ ؛ أَشْهَدُ أَن لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الله
أَشْهَدُ أَن مُحَمَّداً رَسُولَ الله ، أَشْهَدُ أَن مُحَمَّداً رَسُولَ الله ؛ حَيٌّ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ ؛ حَيٌّ عَلَى
الصَّلَاةِ ؛ حَيٌّ عَلَى الْفَلَاحِ ؛ قَدْ قَامَتِ الصَّلَاةُ ، قَدْ قَامَتِ الصَّلَاةُ ؛ الله أَكْبَرُ ،
الله أَكْبَرُ ؛ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا الله

(3) The Imām

The prayer can be offered behind every Muslim whether he is pious or impious. However, if it is possible to select an *imām* (prayer-leader), the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that this responsibility should be given to the person who reads the Qur’ān the most. Then if all the people among whom the selection is to be made are equal as far as reading the Qur’ān is concerned, then the one who is the most aware of the Sunnah should be selected and if in this aspect too the concerned individuals are equal, then the person who was the first to migrate and if in this aspect too they are equal then the person who is the eldest. He further said that a person should not lead the prayer when he goes to the place of some other prayer-leader; in such a case, he should pray behind that prayer-leader.¹⁹²

The Prophet (sws) has said that a prayer-leader should not prolong the prayer because there can be sick people behind him, and the weak and the elderly.¹⁹³ Anas (rta) reports: “I have never seen anyone offer the prayer lightly and yet in a thorough manner than the Prophet (sws); such was his concern that he would shorten the prayer if he heard a child crying thinking that his mother would be apprehensive for him.”¹⁹⁴

A prayer-leader should straighten the rows of the prayer with great care and vigilance. Nu‘mān ibn Bashīr says that the Prophet (sws) would straighten our rows of the prayer as if he would be straightening arrows from them.¹⁹⁵

191. Ibid., vol. 1, 134, (no. 502).

192. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 271, (no. 1532).

193. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 115, (no. 703); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 195, (no. 1046).

194. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 116, (no. 709); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 196, (no. 1056).

195. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 185, (no. 979).

(4) The Followers

The Prophet (sws) has directed those who stand in prayer behind a prayer-leader to not supersede him; rather they should say the *takbīr* after him. They should say سَمِعَ اللَّهُ رَبِّنَا وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ (Our Lord! And all gratitude is for you) after he has recited لَمَنْ حَمَدَهُ (God heard him who expressed his gratitude to him) and follow this procedure in all practices of the prayer.¹⁹⁶ Anas (rta) narrates: “Once the Prophet (sws) turned to us after the prayer and said: ‘O People! I am your prayer-leader. Do not supersede me in the *rukū’* or the prostration or while standing straight in the prayer or while ending the prayer.’”¹⁹⁷

He similarly emphasized that the rows of the prayer should be kept straight,¹⁹⁸ the shoulders should be in line and there should be no space in between and people should stand right adjacent to one another.¹⁹⁹ The mentally mature should stand ahead, then those who are younger to them and then those who are even younger.²⁰⁰

The first row of the congregational prayer shall first be filled, then the second and then the third.²⁰¹ Keeping the rows straight has been regarded by the Prophet (sws) as an essential for the prayer.²⁰² He is reported to have said: “O People! Be gentle with your brothers and do not leave spaces for Satan in between the rows and remember he who endeavoured to unite a row, the Almighty will unite him [with others], and he who broke a row, the Almighty will break his relation with people.”²⁰³ He similarly said: “Make rows like the angels do; they stand close to one another before the Almighty and complete the front rows first.”²⁰⁴

One should try to reach the first row. Narratives relate the blessings of praying in the first row.²⁰⁵ However, if at times, a person is not able to reach on time, he should walk with calmness and dignity. Whatever congregational prayer remains, he should offer it in congregation and then complete the remaining himself.²⁰⁶

The rows for the prayer should be made at the arrival of the prayer-leader.²⁰⁷ In

196. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 119, (no. 733); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 174, (no. 921).

197. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 182, (no. 961).

198. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 117, (no. 717); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 185, (no. 978).

199. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 175-176, (no. 666).

200. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 184, (no. 972).

201. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 4, 112, (no. 13027).

202. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 118, (no. 723); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 184, (no. 975).

203. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 175-176, (no. 666).

204. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 183, (no. 968).

205. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 102, (no. 615); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 185, (no. 981).

206. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 105, (no. 636); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 243, (no. 1359).

207. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 105, (no. 637); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 244, (no. 1365).

the rows reserved for women, if there is just one woman, she can also stand alone. Anas (rta) narrates that once the Prophet (sws) led a prayer such that two men stood in the front row and Umm Sulaym stood alone in the row behind.²⁰⁸

xi. Mosques

The oldest mosque of the world is the Bayt al-Harām. It was built by Abraham (sws). The founder of the Jerusalem mosque is Dā’ūd (sws),²⁰⁹ while the mosque at Madīnah was built by Muḥammad (sws). All these three mosques carry unique significance. The Prophet (sws) has said that it is towards these three mosques that people can travel to pay homage to them and to pray in them.²¹⁰ Praying in these mosques earns great reward. Consequently, about the Bayt al-Harām he is reported to have said that praying in it is a hundred thousand times more rewarding than praying elsewhere, and about his mosque at Madīnah, he has said that praying in it is a thousand times more rewarding than praying in any other mosque except the Bayt al-Harām.²¹¹ Apart from these, all mosques of the world built or yet to be built have equal status with regard to the reward they earn for a believer who prays in them. These mosques are not made for trade, entertainment or merry-making; they are reserved for the worship of the Almighty. The dearest of buildings in the sight of Allah are these mosques.²¹² Waiting for the prayer time in them is like praying itself.²¹³ The farther people come to these places for worship, the more the reward they earn.²¹⁴ The etiquette of coming to the mosques which is mentioned in narratives is that when a person comes to the mosque, he should offer two *rak’at* before sitting down, unless something prevents him to do so. This etiquette is greatly emphasized in various narratives.²¹⁵ Moreover, it has also been narrated that when the Prophet (sws) would enter the mosque, he would seek the refuge of the Almighty in the following words:

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَبِوَجْهِ الْكَرِيمِ، وَسُلْطَانِهِ الْقَدِيمِ، مِنْ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

I seek refuge with Allah the Almighty, the benevolent, the eternal King from the accursed Satan.²¹⁶

208. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 68, (no. 380); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 266, (no. 1499).

209. It was completed by Solomon (sws) and is also called the Temple of Solomon.

210. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 190-191, (no. 1197); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 584, (no. 3384).

211. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 190, (no. 1190); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 582-583, (no. 3374); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 186, (no. 1406).

212. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 271, (no. 1528).

213. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 106, (no. 647).

214. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 106, (no. 651); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 268-269, (nos. 1513, 1518, 1519).

215. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 77, (no. 444); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 290, (no. 1654).

216. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 124, (no. 466).

It is also narrated that the Prophet (sws) said: “When anyone among you enters a mosque, he should say: اللَّهُمَّ افْتَحْ لِي أَبْوَابَ رَحْمَتِكَ (O God! Open for me the doors of your mercy) and when he leaves it, he should say: اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ فَضْلِكَ (O God! I seek from you your blessings).”²¹⁷

xii. Rectifying Mistakes in the Prayer

In case a person makes a mistake or thinks that he has made a mistake in the utterances and practices of the prayer, the amendment prescribed as a *sunnah* is that if amends can be made for the mistake, then they should be made and two prostrations (called “prostrations in lieu of a mistake”) should be offered before ending the prayer, and if making amends is not possible, then only the prostrations should be offered.

Following are the details of the incidents which occurred during the lifetime of the Prophet (sws) in which such prostrations were offered.

Ibn Buḥaynah says that once the Prophet (sws) led our *zuhr* prayer but did not sit down after the first two *rak'āt* and stood up for the third *rak'āt*. People also stood up with him until the time when the prayer was about to end and the people were waiting for the *salām* to be said, the Prophet (sws) uttered the *takbīr* and before saying the *salām* offered two prostrations and then said the *salām*.²¹⁸

It is narrated by Ibn Mas'ūd (rta) that once when the Prophet (sws) led the *zuhr* congregational prayer, he prayed five *rak'āt*. He was asked: “Has the prayer been lengthened?” He replied: “What happened?” The people declared that he had prayed five *rak'āt*. At this, the Prophet (sws) turned his feet while sitting and faced the *qiblah* and then offered two prostrations and then said the *salām*. Then he turned towards the people and said: “If some new directive had been revealed about the prayer, I would have told you; the fact is that I am a human being like you; I also forget the way you do; so when I forget, remind me and remember that if any of you has any doubt in the prayer, he should ascertain what is the right course and then complete his prayer according to it, say the *salām* and then offer two prostrations.”²¹⁹

Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrates that [once] the Prophet (sws) prayed two *rak'āt* for the *zuhr* or the ‘asr prayer and then said the *salām*. There was a wood lying in the front portion of the mosque. He went and rested against it in a state of slight anger. Abū Bakr (rta) and ‘Umar (rta) too were present there but were not able to speak because of great respect for him. In the meantime, some impetuous people came out from the mosque and started saying that the prayer has been reduced. At this, a person called Dhū al-Yadayn mustered some courage and went over to the Prophet (sws) and asked him: “Did you forget or has the prayer been

217. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 289, (no. 1652).

218. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 195, (nos. 1224, 1225); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 229-230, (no. 1269).

219. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 70-71, (nos. 401, 404); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 230-231, (nos. 1274, 1281).

shortened?" The Prophet (sws) replied: "I have neither forgotten nor has the prayer been shortened." "Something has happened, O Messenger of God!" he continued. The Prophet (sws) asked for corroboration from the people. They also declared similarly; so the Prophet (sws) prayed two more *rak'āt* and then turned to say the *salām* and then said the *takbīr*; then offered a prostration consuming his routine time for it or increased the time a little; then raised his head and said the *takbīr*. Then said the *takbīr* and then offered a prostration consuming his routine time for it or increased the time a little. He then raised his head and said the *takbīr*.²²⁰

Imrān ibn Ḥusayn says that the Prophet (sws) prayed the 'asr prayer and after three *rak'āt* turned to say the *salām* and then went over to his room. A person called Khirbāq who had very long hands told him of this. He came out in anger dragging his cloak behind him and asked the people: "Is he telling the truth." When they confirmed it, the Prophet (sws) prayed one more *rak'āt* then turned to say the *salām*. He then offered two prostrations and then again turned to say the *salām*.²²¹

The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: "When anyone among you is doubtful that whether he has prayed three *rak'āt* or four, he should try to base his decision about which he is more sure and leave aside what is doubtful; he should then offer two prostrations before the *salām*. If [ultimately] he has prayed five *rak'āt*, these prostrations will make them into an even number and if he has prayed four, then these prostrations will become a source of humiliation for Satan."²²²

If a prayer-leader makes a mistake and does not realize it, the followers should correct him. For this, the *sunnah* prescribed is that they shall say سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَقُوَّمُوا لِلَّهِ فَاتِنْ (۲۳۸ : ۲) (and stand before the Almighty with great respect, (2:238)).

xiii. Etiquette of the Prayer

The prayer is worshipping God and earnestly presenting one's supplications before Him. So where the Qur'ān directed Muslims to safeguard the prayer, it has said: (۲۳۸ : ۲) وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ فَاتِنْ (and stand before the Almighty with great respect, (2:238)).

Following are the directives of the Prophet (sws) that explain this verse of the Qur'ān:

1. Conversation should be avoided during the prayer. He has said: "The prayer is only glorifying the Almighty and declaring His sovereignty and reciting the

220. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 196, (no. 1229); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 232, (no. 1288).

221. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 233, (no. 1293).

222. Ibid., 230, (no. 1272).

223. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 111-112, 192, (nos. 684, 1204); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 180-181, (nos. 949, 954).

224. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 236-237, (no. 907).

Qur'ān and no one is allowed to converse in any way during it.”²²⁵ Zayd ibn Arqam says: “Previously we used to converse with one another during the prayer, but after the revelation of وَقُوْمُوا لِلَّهِ فَاتَّيْنُونْ, we were stopped from it and we were told to pray in silence.”²²⁶ Ibñ Mās'ūd (rta) narrates: “When we used to say the *salām* to the Prophet (sws) in the prayer, he would reply; however, when we returned from the land of king Negus he did not reply to our *salām*. We inquired: ‘O Prophet of God! You used to respond to the *salām*.’ He replied: ‘One can only have a single involvement in the prayer.’”²²⁷

2. One should not look here and there in the prayer. ‘Ā’ishah (rta), the mother of the believers, says: “When I asked the Prophet (sws) about it, he replied: ‘This is like Satan snatching the prayer away from a person.’”²²⁸ Similarly, the Prophet (sws) severely admonished people for looking towards the sky. He is reported to have said: “What is the matter with people that they raise their eyes during the prayer towards the sky; they should refrain from this, otherwise there is a possibility that their eyes shall be snatched away.”²²⁹

3. The prayer should be offered with complete calmness and serenity. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: “What is it that I see you raising your hands the way the tails of unruly horses are raised; remain calm during the prayer.”²³⁰

4. During the prayer, hair and clothes should not be tampered with. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: “I have been directed to prostrate myself on seven limbs and to not tuck my clothes and hair during the prayer.”²³¹

5. There should not be anything in front of the prayer place which can become a source of distraction. Anas (rta) narrates that ‘Ā’ishah (rta) had hung a curtain in the house. When the Prophet saw it, he asked her: “Remove it because the pictures [imprinted on it] will keep coming before me during the prayer.”²³²

6. If food is at hand, then one should eat it and then calmly offer the prayer so that one is not thinking of food during the prayer and is in fact thinking of prayer during food. The same directive was given by the Prophet (sws) if a person feels a call of nature. He is reported to have said: “If food is in front of you or one feels like urinating or defecating, one should not offer the prayer.”²³³

7. If a person is compelled to do something during the prayer, then one should

225. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 218-219, (no. 1199).

226. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 191, (no. 1200); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 219, (nos. 1203, 1204).

227. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 651, (no. 3875); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 219, (no. 1201).

228. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 122, (no. 751).

229. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 122, (no. 750); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 183, (no. 967).

230. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 183, (no. 968).

231. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 132, (no. 812); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 202, (no. 1096).

232. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 67, (no. 374).

233. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 226, (no. 1246).

not prolong it. It has been narrated that a person was levelling the mud at the place of prostration. When the Prophet (sws) saw him, he said: “If you had to do it, you should have done it once only.”²³⁴

8. While standing in prayer, a person should not place his hands on his hips, and while sitting, he should not take support. The Prophet (sws) has stopped us from this.²³⁵

9. Yawning should be refrained from during the prayer. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: “If anyone of you feels like yawning during the prayer, he should try to control it as far as possible; otherwise, he should place a hand on his mouth.”²³⁶

10. A person should be decently and appropriately dressed while praying. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that if there is only one cloth, it should not be worn in a manner that some of its portion is not on the shoulder.²³⁷ He has similarly said that Allah does not accept the prayer of mature women who do not wear a cloak during the prayer.²³⁸

The above mentioned etiquette relates to the external form of the prayer. There are some inner etiquette too under ﷺ قَاتِنْنَاهُمْ لِلَّهِ وَ قَاتِنْنَاهُمْ لِلَّهِ, which every Muslim should observe. They are:

1. One should not be lazy and sluggish during the prayer. This is a very common form of negligence in prayer and a person who is guilty of it is neither able to be punctual in his prayer nor vigilant in offering the prayer in congregation. Similarly, a person also is not able to focus his attention towards the Almighty during the prayer. Its apparent reasons can be many. For example, sleep can be one of its causes. Likewise, pre-occupation and worldly involvements can cause laziness. However, if one reflects deeply, its real reason is found within the heart of a person and every Muslim should try his best to remove it. In the words of Imām Amīn Ahṣān İslāhī, the measures which can be adopted for this, are:

The first thing is that one should fully understand the importance which the prayer has in Islam. The prayer is the first manifestation of faith. The first thing that originates from faith is the prayer, and then it is from the prayer that the rest of Islam originates. The foremost pillar among the pillars on which the edifice of Islam rests is the prayer. So, if anyone razes this pillar to ground, it is as if he has razed to ground the whole structure of Islam. The Companions (rta) of the Prophet (sws) considered the prayer to be the

234. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 192, (no. 1207); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 222, (no. 1219).

235. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 195, (no. 1219); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 222, (no. 1218); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 247, 259, (nos. 947, 992).

236. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1294, (nos. 7491, 7493).

237. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 64, (no. 359); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 211, (no. 1151).

238. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 170, (no. 641); Ibn Hibbān, *Sahīḥ*, 540, (no. 1711).

distinction between belief and disbelief. The caliph ‘Umar (rta) had directed his administrators and representatives that their greatest responsibility is showing vigilance to the prayer; a person who is negligent to the prayer will be even more negligent to the rest of the directives of Islam. Since the source and fountainhead of Islam is the prayer, hence if one has to adhere to religion he must foremost adhere to the prayer. By adhering to the prayer, he actually is able to adhere to the rest of religion. If he shows laziness in prayer or is indifferent to it, he breaks all bounds set by religion and hands over his reins to base desires. About the People of the Book, the Qur’ān says that their negligence to the prayer led them to lewdness and vulgarity.

It must also be kept in consideration that each part of religion has a status which the Almighty Himself has ascertained. Something which has been regarded as a pillar of religion is nevertheless a pillar. Unless it is erected, the edifice of religion will not be erected. If a person does not adhere to the prayer and is involved in welfare work, all his efforts are in vain as regards adopting religion is concerned because he is constructing a building that has no foundation. Just as nothing can replace the foundations of a building, similarly nothing can replace the role of the prayer in religion. It is to make people comprehend this reality that it is narrated in a Ḥadīth that the optional prayers of a person will not be accepted until he offers the obligatory ones.

The second thing which is necessary to curb laziness is that a person should try to become vigilant in remembering God. This means that as soon as a person hears the *adhān*, he should leave everything aside and start preparing for the prayer and get ready to go to the mosque. Slackness should not be displayed in this preparation; in fact, it should bear the mark of vigour and liveliness. Just as a dutiful servant is always ready to receive the directive of his master and as soon as he hears his voice he rushes to his presence leaving aside everything, in the same manner a person should attend to the prayer as soon as he hears the *adhān*. It should be kept in mind that at the time of the prayer, the most important and foremost obligation in the eyes of God is to offer it. Except for compelling circumstances in which a person might have a reason, in no other circumstances can some task be given any preference over the prayer, even if it concerns religion. If for some period, a person makes it a point to attend to the prayer as soon as he hears the *adhān*, there is all the probability that the Almighty help him by making this a habit for him and he is able to get rid of this malady of laziness regarding the prayer.

The Prophet (sws) has suggested an excellent remedy to do away with the laziness caused by sleep ... No doubt it is really a difficult thing to overcome as long as a person dallies around while lying in bed. However, as soon as he shows resolve and gets up from the bed, remembers the Almighty, does the *wudū* and offers the prayer, his laziness and lethargy gradually turn into vigour and vitality until he reaches a stage that he no longer has any desire to

sleep. In fact, the desire which does remain in him is that why was not he able to acquire this bliss of remaining awake earlier on. It should be remembered that a person will never regret sacrificing his sleep for the prayer. After a small period of this struggle against sleep, the remembrance of the bliss of remaining awake becomes so dominant in a person that it wakes him up from the deepest of slumbers.²³⁹

2. The prayer should be protected from latent thoughts and suggestions that keep bombarding a person. Everyone knows that it is not easy to remain shielded from them. The reason for this is that Satan is the enemy of the prayer to the same extent as the Almighty is pleased with it. Thus he launches his onslaught on the heart and mind of a person as soon as a person begins the prayer. Imām Amin Ahsan Islāhī, while delineating the various measures to counter the onslaught of Satan, writes:

A general remedy for this is that as soon as a person witnesses such a situation, he should seek refuge with Allah and should resolve to complete the prayer and show vigilance in it much like the person who has been informed of an imminent enemy attack but he has made up his mind to complete his prayer come what may and will become indifferent to such latent suggestions. Sometimes, it is this resolve and enthusiasm which destroys the spell woven by Satan.

The second thing which becomes effective in this matter is that he should say the words of the prayer in an audible manner and is able to give attention to their meanings. However, it is essential that one must not say them so loudly that others who may be offering the prayer nearby get disturbed. This becomes very helpful in combating such latent murmurs of Satan. When a person's mind is focused on meanings of the prayer, he is greatly protected from such onslaughts.

The third thing which becomes very effective in this regard is that in general life also one should try to keep one's thoughts very pure. One should try to always think about things which are beneficial to him and to others in both worldly and religious affairs. One should keep in mind that the hand-mill of one's mind keeps churning. If he inputs pure raw material in it, it will keep crushing it and produce high quality flour. On the other hand, there are the evil suggestions of Satan. As soon as he gets the opportunity, he throws a handful of stones and pebbles in it and the hand-mill starts grinding them and this really hampers its working. If this mishap occurs frequently, the hand-mill starts to malfunction and is unable to churn out pure flour. The best of grains will produce substandard flour.

239. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tazkiyah-i nafs*, 250-252.

A person who has endeavoured hard to generally keep his thoughts clean will encounter less evil whisperings from Satan because he will find the spiritual fodder in the prayer which he is generally used to and if certain thoughts do disturb him, they are not as improper so as to contradict the objective of the prayer. Sometimes, a person as near to God as 'Umar (rta) would find his prayer being invaded with distractive thoughts. At times, during the prayer, he would think of arranging his armies busy fighting in Persia and Syria. A person can object that even such pre-occupation distracts a person during the prayer. No doubt, this is a distraction but there is tremendous difference between getting distracted by evil thoughts and by thoughts which are primarily pure and needed.²⁴⁰

3. A person should fully understand and pay full attention to whatever he says in the prayer. The utterances of the prayer delineated earlier consist of celebrating the praises of the Lord, expressing His sovereignty and majesty, beseeching Him and to top these all reciting Sūrah Fātiḥah and some portion of the Qur'ān. The relationship between Sūrah Fātiḥah and the Qur'ān is that of a supplication and its response and the order in which these utterances occur in a prayer show that they remind us that the very first thing which should be asked from the Almighty in this world is His guidance and it is only the Qur'ān which provides guidance now till the Day of Judgement. Imām Amin Aḥsan Islāḥī writes:

... this [Surah Fātiḥah] is the greatest supplication that a person can think of in this world. This supplication has been taught to us by the Almighty Himself. A better way of asking from the Almighty than what is expressed in this *sūrah* cannot even be imagined and nothing better than what he asks in this prayer can be imagined either. The Almighty Himself has taught us the right way to ask from Him and has also informed us of what to ask from Him. When the prelude to what is being asked is also correct and what is being asked is also befitting and is something which can be asked only from Whom it is being asked and the bestower is the Most gracious of all, then what doubt remains that it will not be granted.²⁴¹

After this, he has written about the recital of the Qur'ān in the following words:

It is the inimitability of the Qur'ān that whichever of its portion one reads, featured in it is the basic message of this divine book. Mentioned every now and then is the true comprehension of the Almighty, the way one should lead one's life, the Hereafter and the reward and punishment which will take place in it. The only thing is that the style and manner would be different. At one place, something is set in legal style; at another, one will find the Qur'ān earnestly urging the believers to adopt something; at some instances, tales and

240. Ibid., 253-254.

241. Ibid., 246.

anecdotes would be narrated to drive the point home, while in some verses one would find effective parables to convey the meaning. Similarly, at some places, people would be asked in a polite and gentle way, and, at others, they would be threatened because of their misdeeds. However, this much is certain that whatever portion is read, even if it constitutes three verses, one would find that it contains a very powerful and effective reminder of what is really required to keep oneself on the right path.²⁴²

It is apparent from the above discussion that it is essential that one must understand what he utters during the prayer. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: “A person who prays, whispers to His Lord; thus he should know what he is whispering.”²⁴³ Imām Amin Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

One should not think that there is no need to reflect on the *sūrah*s and supplications everyday when they are read repeatedly in every prayer and that understanding them once is enough. Those who hold this view are not aware of the essence of the prayer and its supplications. The prayer is not offered to increase one’s knowledge: it is offered to renew one’s pledge with the Almighty and to seek help, guidance and mercy from Him. How can this purpose be achieved by offering it without knowing what one is uttering unless a person is not attentive.²⁴⁴

4. One should take care that the prayer does not become a pretentious display. This is the most common and most dangerous affliction of the prayer. In the words of Islāhī, the reason that this is the most common affliction is that there are so many variations in being showy of the prayer that even the most careful of persons is unable to ward off its attacks from his prayer; similarly, in his opinion, it is the most dangerous because sincerity is a pre-requisite of the prayer and showing off is opposite to sincerity. In his opinion, two things are required for its remedy. He writes:

One of them is that a person should be well aware of the various forms of pomposity and showing off. Books such as Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā al-‘ulūm* are very useful in making a person aware of these forms. It is only after knowing something thoroughly that one is able to check it and get rid of it if he wants to. Whereas this awareness is required by the common man, it is required much more by scholars of Islam and the pious. The reason is that pomposity seldom manifests itself through worldly affairs; it often comes in the guise of religiosity and such are its alluring forms and types that the greatest of scholars and religious pundits end up being its targets, and, at times, lose their religiosity and piety they attained in their life.

242. Ibid., 248.

243. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 2, 122, (no. 4909).

244. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tazkiyah-i nafs*, 256.

The second thing that is an effective remedy for this affliction is the *tahajjud* prayer. This prayer is offered alone at night and it is very taxing for one's self; it has been emphasized that one should keep it a secret; thus those who only pray to brag and show off never find the strength to offer the *tahajjud* prayer; only those people are able to find the strength to offer it who are either miles away from pomposity or are fully aware of its evils and in order to save themselves from these evils have found refuge in this prayer. The *tahajjud* prayer is the most effective remedy of this affliction as long as a person is able to maintain its secrecy. There are people who even brag and show off their *tahajjud* prayer. Either they start advertising this in the guise of various insinuating statements, or their students and disciples do this job for them. In such circumstances, not only is this prayer of no use as a remedy, it helps a person even more in his tendency of showing off.²⁴⁵

If the prayer is offered while giving due consideration to these etiquette, then in the words of Islāhī, it is characterized by the following:

... when a person stands in prayer, he is an embodiment of humility. With hands tied, eyes lowered, neck bending downwards, feet placed adjacent, he stands while being cut off totally from his surroundings; dignity and honour seem personified in him, he is a portrait of silence and seriousness. At times, he kneels before his Lord, and, at others, places his forehead and nose on the ground and sometimes spreads his hands in prayer. In short, whatever forms of humility that can be adopted, are with dignity and honour adopted by a person who stands to pray. The picture which thus emerges of this person bears clear evidence that he is observing his Lord and if this is not the case, he knows for sure that the Lord is observing him. It is this prayer which can be termed as a pinnacle among prayers. This prayer is entirely different from the prayer offered with a juristic mind. It is this prayer which is in fact required for the purification of the soul. This prayer is a reflection of a person's inner-self. In this prayer is reflected the humility and servility for the Almighty present within his heart. Not only is his back bent in the prayer, his heart is also bent before the Almighty. Not only does his forehead touch the ground, his soul also prostrates before the Lord of the worlds.²⁴⁶

xiv. The Friday Prayer

On Fridays, it has been made incumbent upon Muslims to pray in congregation at the time of *zuhr* prayer and in place of it. The way prescribed by the *sharī‘ah* for this prayer is the following:

1. There are two *rak‘āt* of this prayer.
2. In contrast with the *zuhr* prayer, the recital shall not be silent.

245. Ibid., 258.

246. Ibid., 244-245.

3. The *iqāmah* shall be said before the prayer.
4. Before the prayer, the prayer-leader shall deliver two sermons to remind and urge people about various teachings of Islam. He shall deliver these sermons while standing. The prayer-leader shall sit for a short while after he ends the first sermon and then stand up to deliver the second one.
5. The *adhān* for the prayer shall be recited when the prayer-leader reaches the place where he is to deliver the sermon.

As soon as the *adhān* is said, it is incumbent upon all Muslim men to leave all their involvements and come to the mosque if they have no legitimate excuse.

The sermon shall be delivered and the prayer shall be led by the rulers of the Muslims and this prayer shall be offered only at places which have been specified by them or where a representative of theirs is present to lead the prayer.

The Qur’ān has mentioned this prayer in the following words:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِي لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعُوا إِلَى ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ إِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَإِذْ كُرُوا اللَّهُ كَثِيرًا
لَّعْنَكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (٦٢: ٩-١٠)

Believers! When you are summoned to Friday prayer, hasten to the remembrance of God and cease your trading. This is best for you, if you but knew it. Then, when the prayer ends, disperse and go your ways in quest of God’s bounty. And keep remembering God a lot so that you may prosper. (62:9-10)

The Prophet (sws) has directed those who lead the prayer to shorten the sermon and prolong the prayer. He has said that it is enough for a person to be sensible if he has this trait.²⁴⁷

It is evident from certain narratives that for reminding and counselling people and for the purpose of collective worship, it was this day that had in reality been fixed in the religion of the prophets.²⁴⁸ According to historians, before the advent of Muhammad (sws), Ka'b ibn Lūyā or Quṣayy ibn Kilāb would also assemble the people of Quraysh on this day.²⁴⁹ Regarding the selection of this day, the Prophet (sws) has said that it was on this day that Adam was created and on this day was he put in the orchard and on this day was he cast out and the Day of Judgement will also be a Friday.²⁵⁰ The Prophet (sws) is also reported to have said that there comes a time in this day in which the Almighty grants a rightful wish of a believer.²⁵¹ Consequently, he warned people that if they do not come for the

247. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 348-349, (no. 2009).

248. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 141, (no. 876); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 343-344, (no. 1980).

249. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, vol. 8, 58.

250. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 343, (no. 1977).

251. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 150, (no. 935); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 342-

Friday prayer, their hearts shall be sealed and indifference shall overcome them.²⁵² On the other hand, the Prophet (sws) has given glad tidings to people – who take a bath, fully cleanse themselves, are befittingly adorned and attired, try not to pierce and sit between two people, pray whatever they can at the beckoning of the Almighty and sit silently to listen to the sermon of the prayer-leader – glad tidings that the Almighty will forgive the sins they have committed between the two Fridays.²⁵³ He has also said that on Friday, angels stand at the door of the mosques and write the names of people in order of their entry to the mosques. Consequently, those who come very early are similar to a person who has sent a camel for sacrifice, then he who sends a cow for this purpose and then he who sends a sheep for this purpose and then a hen and then an egg. Then once the prayer-leader comes to deliver his sermon, they fold their scrolls and listen to his advice and counsel.²⁵⁴

xv. The ‘Id Prayer

On the days of ‘īd al-adhā and ‘īd al-fitr, it is essential for the Muslims that they arrange a collective prayer like that of the Friday prayer. Following is its methodology:

1. This prayer shall consist of two *rak‘āt*.
2. In both *rak‘āt*, the Qur’ān shall be recited loudly.
3. While standing in *qiyām*, some additional *takbīrs* shall be recited.
4. Neither will there be any *adhān* for the prayer nor any *iqāmah*.
5. After the prayer, the prayer-leader shall deliver two sermons to remind and urge people about various teachings of Islam. Both these sermons shall be delivered with the prayer-leader standing. He shall sit for a while in between the two.
6. Like the Friday prayer, this prayer too shall be led and its sermon delivered by the rulers of the Muslims and their representatives and it shall be offered only at those places which have been specified by them, where either they or their representatives are present to lead the prayer.

The above methodology is the *sunnah* regarding the ‘īd prayer.

However, it should remain clear about the additional *takbīrs* said in them that their number has not been fixed. Muslims can say them according to their own convenience before or after the recital in whatever number they want to. They can also do the *raf‘a al-yadayn* (raising of hands) while saying them. It is evident from certain narratives that at times the Prophet (sws) said seven additional *takbīrs* in the first *rak‘āt* and five in the second.²⁵⁵

343, (nos. 1969, 1970, 1975).

252. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 347, (no. 2002).

253. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 142, (no. 883). This refers to sins which do not relate to obligations towards one’s fellow human beings or which do not require repentance, making amends or atonement.

254. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 142, (no. 881); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 342, (no. 1964).

255. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 297-298, (nos. 1149, 1151, 1152).

Similarly, it should remain clear that women too should participate in this prayer with full diligence. Umm ‘Atiyah narrates that regarding menstruating women, the Prophet (sws) said: “They should not pray, but should be part of the congregation and the supplications of the Muslims.”²⁵⁶

xvi. The Funeral Prayer

In the religion of the prophets, the prayer for a deceased is held obligatory.²⁵⁷

Once the dead body of the deceased is bathed and enshrouded, this prayer shall be offered in the following manner:

People shall stand in rows behind the prayer-leader after placing the dead body between themselves and the *qiblah*.

The prayer shall begin by saying the *takbīr* and by raising hands.

Like the ‘īd prayer, some additional *takbīrs* shall be said in this prayer.²⁵⁸

The prayer shall end after the *salām* is said while a person is standing once the *takbīrs* and the supplications have been offered.

The above method of the funeral prayer is attested by the consensus of the Muslims and their perpetual adherence to it. Narratives which depict the knowledge and practice of the Prophet (sws) in this matter are detailed out below.

Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrates from the Prophet (sws): “A person who walks in the funeral procession of a Muslim while professing full faith in the Almighty and with a feeling of accountability [to Him], then remains there till the funeral prayer is offered and the deceased is buried, returns with two carats worth of reward with each carat being [as big as] the mountain of Uhud. And he who offers the funeral prayer, but comes back before the burial, also returns with one carat from them.”²⁵⁹

Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrates that the day king Negus died, the Prophet (sws) had it announced, then reached the place of the funeral prayer with the people, made rows [for the prayer] and said four *takbīrs* in the prayer.²⁶⁰

Ibn Abī Laylā narrates that Zayd ibn Arqam usually said four *takbīrs* in our funeral prayers. In one funeral, he said five *takbīrs*. When we asked him, he

256. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 63, (no. 351); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 356, (no. 2056).

257. This law relates to normal circumstances. If in some extra-ordinary circumstances, the funeral prayer becomes difficult to offer, the deceased can be buried without it also. It is evident from various narratives that because of this very reason the Prophet (sws) directed that the martyrs of the battle of Uhud be buried without giving them a bath and without offering the funeral prayer and then after many years offered their funeral prayer at their graves. (Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 214-215, (nos. 1343, 1344)

258. The directive regarding these *takbīrs* is the same as the one stated earlier for the *takbīrs* of ‘īd.

259. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 11, (no. 47); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 380-382, (nos. 2189, 2196).

260. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 200, (no. 1245); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 383, (no. 2204).

replied: “The Prophet (sws) too used to do this at some instances.”²⁶¹

It is narrated by Ṭalḥah ibn ‘Abdullāh: “I prayed behind Ibn ‘Abbās and he read Sūrah Fatihah in it and remarked: ‘I have recited [this out to you] so that you should know that this was the practice of the Prophet (sws).’”²⁶²

‘Ā’ishah (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) said: “Do not speak ill of the dead because they have reached the place where their deeds led them to.”²⁶³

The supplications of this prayer which are ascribed to the Prophet (sws) are the following:

1.

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لَهُ وَارْحَمْهُ وَاعْفُ عَنْهُ وَاعْفَهُ وَأَكْرِمْ بُرْلَهُ وَوَسِعْ مُدْخَلَهُ وَاغْسِلْهُ بِمَاءٍ وَثَلْجٍ وَبَرَدٍ
وَتَقْهِيْهِ مِنْ الْخَطَايَا كَمَا يُتَقَّى الشُّوْبُ الْأَيْضُ مِنْ الدَّنَسِ وَأَبْدِلْهُ دَارِهِ وَأَهْلًا خَيْرًا مِنْ
أَهْلِهِ وَرَوْحًا خَيْرًا مِنْ رَوْجِهِ وَقِهْ فِتْنَةَ الْقَبْرِ وَعَذَابَ النَّارِ

O Lord! Forgive him, pardon him, have mercy on him, and [O Lord!] Grant him prosperity and be a good host to him. Broaden his grave and wash him with water and with snow and with hail. Cleanse him of his sins just as a white piece of cloth is cleansed from dirt. [O Lord!] Grant him a better house in place of his own house and a better family than his own family and a wife better than his own and protect him from the punishment of the grave and from the torment of the Fire.²⁶⁴

2.

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِحَيَّنَا وَمَيَّتَنَا وَشَاهِدَنَا وَغَائِبَنَا وَصَغِيرَنَا وَكَبِيرَنَا وَذَكَرَنَا وَأَشَانَا اللَّهُمَّ مَنْ أَحْيَيْتَهُ مِنْ
فَأَحْيِيهِ عَلَى الْإِسْلَامِ وَمَنْ تَوْفَيْتَهُ مِنْ فَتَوَفَّهُ عَلَى الْإِيمَانِ اللَّهُمَّ لَا تَحْرِمْنَا أَجْرَهُ وَلَا تُضْلِلْنَا بَعْدَهُ

O Lord! Forgive our living and our dead, those [who are] present [here] and those who are not and forgive our young ones and old ones, our men and our women. Lord! Whoever you give life, give him life such that he [follows] Islam and whoever you give death, let him die on faith. Lord! Do not deprive us of the reward of this deceased person and do not lead us astray after him.²⁶⁵

3.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّ فُلَانَ بْنَ فُلَانَ فِي ذَمَّتِكَ وَجَبَلِ جَوَارِكَ فَقِهِ مِنْ فِتْنَةِ الْقَبْرِ وَعَذَابِ النَّارِ وَأَئْتَ أَهْلَ الْوَفَاءِ
وَالْحَقَّ اللَّهُمَّ فَاغْفِرْ لَهُ وَارْحَمْهُ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

Lord! Such-and-such a person who is the son of such-and-such a person is in

261. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 456, (no. 2616).

262. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 213, (no. 1335).

263. Ibid., 224, (no. 1393).

264. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 387, (no. 2232).

265. Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 81, (no. 1498).

your refuge and in the covenant of your asylum. So, [O Lord!] Protect him from the trial of the grave and the torment of the Fire. Only You are worthy of the truth and of the fulfilment of your promises. So, O God! Forgive him and have mercy on him. Indeed, you are Forgiving and Ever-Merciful.²⁶⁶

xvii. The Optional Prayers

What is mentioned above constitutes the minimum amount of worship regarding the prayer which is incumbent upon the Muslims. The Qur’ān (2:158) says: وَمَنْ يَطْوِعْ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلَيْهِ (he who does a virtue of his own will God will accept it and is fully aware of it). Similarly, in 2:45, it has been said that in case of difficulty, help should be sought from the prayer and from perseverance: وَاسْتَعِنُوا بِالصَّبَرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ. Thus in the light of these verses, besides the obligatory prayer, Muslims also offer the optional prayer. The optional (*nafl*) prayers which the Prophet (sws) has offered or has urged people to offer are detailed out below.

(1) Before the Prayer

Before the *fajr* prayer, the Prophet (sws) would generally offer two light *rak‘āt*.²⁶⁷

Hafṣah (rta) says that he would pray these *rak‘āt* as soon as the time of *fajr* would begin.²⁶⁸ ‘Ā’ishah (rta) says that she never saw him more punctual than in offering these *rak‘āt*.²⁶⁹ She has also narrated from the Prophet (sws): “These *rak‘āt* of *fajr* are better than this world and everything it has.”²⁷⁰

Before the *zuhr* prayer, he would sometimes pray two *rak‘āt* and sometimes four.²⁷¹

Before the *maghrib* prayer, the Prophet (sws) himself, in all probability, never offered any *rak‘at*, but he urged others to offer them if God provides them with the will and opportunity.²⁷² Consequently, it has been narrated that in his lifetime, the Companions (rta) would be vigilant in offering these *rak‘āt*.²⁷³

(2) After the Prayer

The Prophet’s routine was to offer two *rak‘āt* at home once he returned from the mosque after praying *zuhr*, *maghrib* and *‘ishā*.²⁷⁴ He followed a similar

266. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 208, (no. 3202).

267. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 102, (nos. 618, 619); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 293, (no. 1676).

268. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 293, (no. 1680).

269. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 212, (no. 1163); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 294, (no. 1686).

270. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 294, (no. 1688).

271. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 188, (nos. 1180, 1182); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 296, (nos. 1698, 1699).

272. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 188, (no. 1183); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 26, (no. 1281).

273. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 188, (no. 1184); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 337, (nos. 1938, 1939).

274. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 188, (no. 1180); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 296,

routine after the Friday prayer.²⁷⁵ A narrative from Abū Hurayrah (rta) says that the Prophet (sws) asked people to pray four *rak'āt* also after the Friday prayer.²⁷⁶ Similarly, there are narratives which depict the blessings of praying four *rak'āt* after the *zuhr* prayer.²⁷⁷

Of the *rak'āt* which are offered before and after prayers, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that those who adhere to offering two *rak'āt* of *fajr*, six of *zuhr*, two each of *maghrib* and *'ishā*, the Almighty will make for them a house in Paradise.²⁷⁸

(3) At the time of Chāshṭ

In mid-morning (*chāshṭ*) too, the Prophet (sws) urged people to offer two *rak'āt*.²⁷⁹ He has said: “As soon as morning comes, charity becomes obligatory upon each of your joints. If a person wants to do it [then he should know that] every word of *tasbīh* is charity, every *takbīr* is charity, urging others to do a pious deed is charity, stopping others from bad deeds is charity and if two *rak'āt* are offered in mid-morning, then they suffice for all these.”²⁸⁰

However, one cannot be certain whether the Prophet (sws) offered this prayer since the narratives in this regard are contradictory.

(4) At the time of Eclipse

When once in the time of the Prophet (sws), a solar eclipse occurred, he led the believers in offering two *rak'āt*. It is narrated that in this prayer, he recited the Qur'ān loudly, did very long *ruku'*s and prostrations and while in the *qiyām* also celebrated the praises of the Lord, glorified Him and beseeched and implored Him. He even repeated the *ruku'* and the *qiyām* more than once while waiting for the eclipse to disappear. Then after finishing the prayer remarked: “The sun and the moon are two signs of the Almighty. Solar and lunar eclipses do not occur because of the life or death of someone; in fact, the Almighty warns His people through such phenomena. So, when you see them, beseech the Almighty, celebrate his sovereignty, offer the prayer and spend in His way.”²⁸¹

(5) To ask for Rain

Narratives mention that the Prophet (sws) offered two *rak'āt* to beseech the Almighty to send rain. In religious parlance, this prayer is called *istisqā'*. These

(no. 1699).

275. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 150, 186, (nos. 937, 1169); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 352, (no. 2039).

276. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 352, (no. 2036).

277. Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 55, (no. 1160).

278. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 295, (nos. 1694, 1695).

279. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 188, (no. 1178); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 292-293, (no. 1672).

280. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 292, (no. 1671).

281. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 167-168, (no. 1044); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 363, (no. 2096).

narratives say that the words of the prayer were recited out loud and before the prayer, the Prophet (sws) supplicated before the Almighty by raising his hands for a long time while facing the *qiblah*.²⁸² One of the supplications uttered by him on such occasions is:

اللَّهُمَّ اسْقُنَا عَيْنَانِ مُعِينًا مَرِيعًا نَافِعًا غَيْرَ ضَارٍ عَاجِلًا غَيْرَ آجِلٍ

O Lord! Drench us with rain that answers our calls; whose consequences are good, which makes things cheaper, which is beneficial and not harmful and which comes soon and not late.²⁸³

(6) In the Solitude of Night

Besides the five prayers during the day and night times, there was another prayer which was obligatory for the Prophet (sws). It is called “the night prayer” or the *tahajjud* prayer. In the seventy ninth verse of Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl, this obligatory nature of the prayer for the Prophet (sws) is mentioned by the words نَافِلَةً لَكَ. Then in Sūrah Muzzammil it is further stated that when the Prophet (sws) was asked to deliver open warning to his people, he was specially directed to be diligent in this prayer. The Qur’ān says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُزَمِّلُ مُ اللَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا نَصْفُهُ أَوْ انْقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيلًا أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتَّلَ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا إِنَّ سُلْطَنِي عَلَيْكَ قَرُولًا تَقِيلًا نَّنَشِّعَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُ وَطْءًا وَأَقْوَمُ قِيلًا إِنَّ لَكَ فِي الَّنَّهَارِ سَبِّحًا طَوِيلًا وَإِذْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَّاعِلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبَّاعِلًا (٧٣: ١-٨)

O you enfolded in your shawl! Stand [in prayer] by night, but not all night. Half the night, or even less or a little more and [in this prayer of yours] recite the Qur’ān in a slow measured tone. Because soon We shall lay on you the burden of a heavy word. Verily, this rising by night is very suitable for the mind’s peace and the heart’s resolve and for the speech’s correctness. Because during the daytime you will be hard-pressed with [this task; so pray at this time], and remember the name of your Lord, and [in this loneliness of the night] devote yourself entirely to Him. (73:1-8)

For common Muslims, this is an optional prayer and it is a great blessing for them if in following the Prophet (sws) they offer this prayer. It has been narrated that he would at most offer eleven *rak’āt* in this prayer and would stand, kneel and prostrate for great lengths of time in it. Indeed some narratives do mention thirteen *rak’āt* but two of them are the optional *rak’āt*. Since the *tahajjud* prayer

282. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 164-165, (nos. 1023, 1025); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 358, (no. 2073). Narratives also mention how the Prophet (sws) shifted his cloak from one shoulder to another, and people generally consider this to be a part of worship. However, no such thing can be regarded as part of worship unless the Prophet (sws) specifies it.

283. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 302, (no. 1169).

was obligatory on the Prophet (sws), he prayed two optional *rak'āt* before them much like the optional *rak'āt* Muslims pray for example before the obligatory *rak'āt* of the *fajr* prayer or after the obligatory *rak'āt* of the *maghrib* prayer. This status of the optional *rak'āt* was not properly understood by people and they counted it among the *rak'āt* of the *tahajjud* prayer.²⁸⁴ In this regard, the narrative which holds primary importance is the following:

عَنْ أَبِي سَلَمَةَ بْنِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ أَخْبَرَهُ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا كَيْفَ كَانَتْ صَلَاةُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي رَمَضَانَ فَقَالَتْ مَا كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَرِيدُ فِي رَمَضَانَ وَلَا فِي غَيْرِهِ عَلَى إِحْدَى عَشْرَةِ رُكُونًا

Abū Salamah, the son of ‘Abd al-Rahmān narrated that he asked ‘Ā’ishah: “Describe the Prophet’s prayer in the Ramadān?” She replied: “Never did the Prophet pray more than eleven *rak'āt* either in Ramadān or in any other month.”²⁸⁵

As per the verbal or practical corroboration of the Prophet (sws), the various ways in which this prayer was offered are the following:

1. After offering two *rak'āt*, the prayer should be ended with the *salām* and then one more *rak'āt* should be offered as *witr*.²⁸⁶
2. After offering the prayer in groups of two *rak'āt*, it should be ended with the *salām*, and then five *rak'āt* should be offered in a manner that one does *qa'dah* in the last *rak'āt* only.²⁸⁷
3. After offering the prayer in groups of four *rak'āt*, it should be ended with the *salām*, and then three *rak'āt* should be offered consecutively with the *qa'dah* being done only in the last *rak'āt* and then the *salām* should be said.²⁸⁸
4. After consecutively praying two, four, six or eight *rak'āt* without the *qa'dah*, which should be done in the last *rak'āt*, one *rak'āt* should be offered standing up after the *qa'dah* without saying the *salām* and then after the *qa'dah* the *salām* should be said.²⁸⁹

It is evident from various narratives that initially in this prayer, the Qur’ān was at times recited loudly and at times silently. Later, the Almighty directed the Prophet (sws) to recite it in a medium pitch:

284. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 182, (nos. 1138, 1139, 1140); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 309-310, (no. 1788).

285. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 183, (no. 1147).

286. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 159, 182, (nos. 992, 1137); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 298, 303, (nos. 1717, 1748).

287. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 299, (no. 1720); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 40, 46, (nos. 1338, 1358, 1359).

288. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 183, (no. 1147); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 299, (no. 1723).

289. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 301-302, (no. 1739).

وَلَا تَجْهَرْ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتْ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا (١١٠:١٧)

And in this night prayer of yours, pray neither with too loud a voice nor in a low one, but, between these extremes, seek a middle course. (17:110)

Consequently, the Prophet (sws) also directed his Companions (rta) to recite in this way. Abū Qatādah narrates that the Prophet (sws) told Abū Bakr (rta): “When I passed by you, you were reciting the Qur’ān in a low tone [in the night prayer].” He replied: “I recite it to Him Who hears [even my] whispers.” The Prophet continued: “Raise your tone a little.” Then he told ‘Umar (rta): “When I passed by you, you were reciting the Qur’ān in a very loud tone.” He replied: “I awake those who sleep, and make Satan run away.” The Prophet said: “Lower your tone a little.”²⁹⁰

It is evident from Sūrah Banī Isrā’īl and Sūrah Muzzammil that the real time of this prayer is when one gets up at night, and for this reason it is called *tahajjud*. The Qur’ān says that this is the time when one is in the presence of the Almighty. The Prophet (sws) has said: “Every night, the Almighty directs His attention upon our world. When one-third night remains, He says: ‘Who is there at this moment to call me so that I can respond to his call; who is it that can ask from Me so that I give him; who is it that seeks mercy that I forgive him.’”²⁹¹

However, if a person is not able to reap the blessings of this prayer, he can offer this prayer before going to sleep. This inference is also evident from the verses of Sūrah Muzzammil which mention a reduction of the amount of the prayer in the following words:

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ تَقُومُ أَدْنَى مِنْ ثُلُثِ اللَّيْلِ وَنَصْفَهُ وَثُلُثَةَ وَطَائِفَةً مِنَ الَّذِينَ مَعَكَ وَاللَّهُ يُقْدِرُ
اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ عَلِمَ أَنَّ لَنْ تُحْصُوهُ قَاتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاقْرُؤُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ عَلِمَ أَنْ سَيَكُونُ مِنْكُمْ
مَرْضَى وَآخَرُونَ يَضْرِبُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَتَعَوَّنُ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَآخَرُونَ يُقَاتَلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
فَاقْرُؤُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ (٢٠:٧٣)

[O Prophet! We had enjoined upon you to stand by night]. Your Lord, indeed, knows that sometimes you stand two thirds of the night and sometimes half and sometimes one third of it, and so does a group among your Companions. And Allah alone [keeping in regard the need of people] appoints the day and night in due measure. He knew that you would not be able to follow this [routine]. So He turned towards you mercifully. Recite then from this Qur’ān [in this prayer] as much as you are able to. He knows that there are those among you who will be sick and others who will be travelling to seek the bounty of Allah and others who will be fighting for the cause of Allah; so, recite then from this as much as

290. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 38, (no. 1329); Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr*, vol. 1, 465, (no. 447).

291. The Qur’ān (17:79); Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 183, (no. 1145); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 307, (no. 1772).

is possible for you. (73:20)

The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

أَيُّكُمْ خَافَ أَنْ لَا يَقُومَ مِنْ آخِرِ اللَّيْلِ فَلْيُوْتِرْ ثُمَّ لِيُرْقُدْ وَمَنْ وَثِقَ بِقِيَامِ مِنْ اللَّيْلِ فَلْيُوْتِرْ مِنْ آخِرِهِ
فَإِنَّ قِرَاءَةَ آخِرِ اللَّيْلِ مَحْضُورَةٌ وَذَلِكَ أَفْضَلُ

Whoever among you fears that he would not be able to get up in the last part of the night, should offer the *witr* before going to sleep; but he who is certain that he would be able to get up, he should offer this prayer in the last part of the night because the recital [of the Qur’ān] at that time is in the presence of the Almighty and it is this which is more blessed.²⁹²

The Prophet (sws) always offered this prayer alone. However, once in a Ramadān when he got up and came out from his retiring enclosure into the mosque and offered this prayer within the mosque, Muslims started to gather with the desire to pray behind him. When the Prophet (sws) saw this, he discontinued offering this prayer fearing that this prayer might also become obligatory for the Muslims. ‘Urwah ibn al-Zubayr narrates:

أَنَّ عَائِشَةَ أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ خَرَجَ لَيْلَةً مِنْ جَوْفِ الْلَّيْلِ فَصَلَّى فِي
الْمَسْجِدِ وَصَلَّى رِجَالٌ بِصَلَاتِهِ فَأَصْبَحَ النَّاسُ فَتَحَدَّثُوا فَاجْتَمَعَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ فَصَلَّوْا مَعَهُ فَأَصْبَحَ
النَّاسُ فَتَحَدَّثُوا فَكَثُرَ أَهْلُ الْمَسْجِدِ مِنْ الْلَّيْلَةِ الثَّالِثَةِ فَخَرَجَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَصَلَّى
فَصَلَّوْا بِصَلَاتِهِ فَلَمَّا كَانَتِ الْلَّيْلَةُ الرَّابِعَةُ عَجَزَ الْمَسْجِدُ عَنْ أَهْلِهِ حَتَّى خَرَجَ لِصَلَاتِ الصُّبْحِ فَلَمَّا
قَضَى الْفَجْرَ أَقْبَلَ عَلَى النَّاسِ فَتَشَهَّدَ ثُمَّ قَالَ أَمَا بَعْدُ فَإِنَّهُ لَمْ يَخْفَ عَلَيَّ مَكَانُكُمْ لَكُنِّي خَشِيتُ
أَنْ تُنْفَرِضَ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَعْجِزُوا عَنْهَا

‘Āishah informed him that the Prophet came out at midnight and offered the prayer in the mosque. Some people also prayed behind him there. When in the morning, these people mentioned [this incident], more people gathered the next day. In this night also, when he prayed in the mosque, people prayed behind him. When again in the morning people mentioned this, the third night a large number gathered at the mosque. In this night too, the Prophet came out and people prayed behind him. In the fourth night, the mosque was packed to capacity with people, but in that night he did not come out until it was *fajr* time. He offered the *fajr* prayer and then he turned to the people and bore witness to the oneness of the Almighty and said: “I was not unaware of your presence; I only feared that it might be made obligatory upon you and then you would not be able to offer it.”²⁹³

292. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 306, (no. 1767).

293. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 322, (no. 2012).

Until the time of ‘Umar’s (rta) rule, people generally offered this prayer alone at their homes or in the mosques when one day he came to the mosque of the Prophet (sws), and saw that people were praying in different groups such that some of them were reciting individually and others behind a prayer-leader. Since in this prayer the recital is loud, there was a state of indiscipline in the mosque. ‘Umar (rta) deeming this to be a show of disrespect to the Qur’ān, appointed Ubayy ibn Ka‘b (rta) as the overall prayer-leader. After this, when another night he happened to chance by and saw the people praying thus, he remarked: “This new thing is good, but that which they leave because of sleep is better than this.”²⁹⁴

It is evident from this narrative that not only did ‘Umar (rta) not join the congregational *tahajjud* prayer, but opined that if this prayer is offered at its actual time, then it earns more blessings than if it is offered before going to sleep.

The Prophet (sws), as has been mentioned earlier, never offered more than eleven *rak‘āt* for this prayer. However, since the number of *rak‘āt* of this prayer is not fixed, when one prayer-leader was appointed to lead the people, they started to pray twenty three *rak‘āt* and even more in Ramadān and called it *tarāwīh*. Ever since that time, Muslims have generally been offering the *tarāwīh* prayer in this manner and most of them are unaware of the fact that it is in fact the *tahajjud* prayer which they are offering with the ‘ishā prayer.

Besides these optional prayers, the Prophet (sws) has regarded two *rak‘āt* after *wudū* as a means of earning great blessing and reward.²⁹⁵ Narratives also mention that he would offer two *rak‘āt* after returning from a journey.²⁹⁶ The Prophet (sws) has also asked Muslims to offer two *rak‘āt* and pray to the Almighty for forgiveness of sins and for *istikhārah*.²⁹⁷ This supplication of *istikhārah* is as follows:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْتَخِرُكَ بِعِلْمِكَ وَأَسْتَقْدِرُكَ بِقُدْرَاتِكَ وَأَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ فَضْلِكَ الْعَظِيمِ فَإِنَّكَ تَقْدِيرُ وَلَا أَقْدِرُ
وَتَعْلَمُ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتَ عَلَامُ الْغُيُوبِ اللَّهُمَّ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّ هَذَا الْأَمْرُ خَيْرٌ لِي فِي دِينِي وَمَعَاشِي
وَعَاقِبَةً أَمْرِي فَاقْدِرْهُ لِي وَيَسِّرْهُ لِي فِيهِ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّ هَذَا الْأَمْرُ شَرٌّ لِي فِي دِينِي
وَمَعَاشِي وَعَاقِبَةً أَمْرِي فَاصْرِفْهُ عَنِّي وَاصْرِفْنِي عَنْهُ وَاقْدِرْهُ لِي الْخَيْرَ حِيثُ كَانَ ثُمَّ أَرْضِي

O Allah! I seek what is better through Your Knowledge, and through Your Might I seek strength, and I beg from You Your great blessings, because You have the might and I do not have the might. And You know everything and I do not know, and You have knowledge of the unseen. O Allah! If in Your

294. Ibid., 322, (no. 2010).

295. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 184, (no. 1149); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 1081, (no. 6324).

296. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 511, (nos. 3087, 3088); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 290-291, (no. 1659).

297. Abū Dā‘ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 87, (no. 1521); Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 186, (no. 1162).

Knowledge this action [which I intend to do] is better with regard to my religion, my life and my fate then destine it for me and make it easy for me and then add blessings to it for me. And O Allah! In Your knowledge if this action is bad for me, for my religion and for my fate, then turn it away from me and turn me away from it, and [O Allah!] whatever is better for me, ordain that for me wherever it is, and then make me satisfied with it.²⁹⁸

2. Zakāh

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَقْرِضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا وَمَا تُفَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا وَأَعْظَمُ أَجْرًا (٢٠:٧٣)

And [in the daytime and at night] be diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh* and [for the cause of your religion and state] lend to Allah a befitting loan, and [remember] whatever good you send forth for yourselves you shall find it with Allah better than before and greater in reward. (73:20)

In the verse quoted above, and at numerous other places in the Qur’ān, Muslims are directed to pay *zakāh* from their wealth. After the *salāh* (the prayer), it is the second important worship ritual in Islam. Among the various mannerisms which man has generally adopted to worship deities, one is to present before them a part of their wealth, livestock and produce. In the religion of the prophets, this is the essence of *zakāh*, and on this very basis, it is has been regarded as a ritual of worship. Names like *sadaqah*, *niyādh*, *bhīnt* and *nadhr* are also used for it. In the religion of the prophets too, the status of *zakāh* is no different, and, on this very basis, it is regarded as ritual of worship. Consequently, the Qur’ān has used the word *sadaqah* for it in various verses, and has explained that it should be paid with humility:

الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيَنْهَوْنَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ (٥٥:٥)

Those who are diligent in the prayer, pay *zakāh* such that [their hearts] bow [down in humility]. (5:55)

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ مَا آتُوا وَفُلُوْبُهُمْ وَجِلَّةُ أَنْهَمْ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ (٦٠:٢٣)

And those who whenever give, give such that their hearts are filled with awe knowing that they will have to return to their Lord. (23:60)

Zakāh is a share imposed on one’s wealth and has been reserved for Allah. The Qur’ānic directive: (٤١:٦) (give away to him on his harvest day what is due upon you, (6:141)) refers to this very aspect. The general custom about it was that once it had been presented, it was taken from the place of

298. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 186, (no. 1162).

worship and given to its keepers so that they were able to serve the needs of the worshippers from this money. In our *shari'ah*, this practice has been discontinued. We have been directed to give this money to our rulers so that the needs of the state can be met; however, this change does not effect the essence of *zakāh*. It is reserved for the Almighty and when His servants pay it, the decision for accepting it also comes from Him. The Qur'ān says:

اَلَّمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبِلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنِ ابْنَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ (١٠٤:٩)

Do they not know that God Himself accepts the repentance of His servants and takes their charities? (9:104)

The importance of this ritual of worship can be understood from the fact that like the prayer the Almighty has regarded it as a pre-requisite for a person to be a Muslim. The Qur'ān says: فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاءَ فَإِنَّهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فِي الدِّينِ (٩:١١) (so if they repent, become diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*, they are your brethren in religion, (9:11)). It is evident from the Qur'ān that after the prayer, it is the second manifestation of faith. It is apparent from the verses of Sūrah Mu'minūn and Sūrah Ma'ārij, which have been quoted earlier in the section on the prayer, that among righteous deeds, paying *zakāh* is second to offering the prayer. Consequently, it is stated in the Qur'ān with this very status, and at one place while mentioning the idolaters the Almighty has said that they do not pay *zakāh*; for this very reason, they are the ones who are the real rejecters of accountability in the Hereafter:

وَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاءَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ (٤١:٦-٧)

And woe be to the idolaters, who do not pay the *zakāh*, and it is these who reject the Hereafter. (41:6-7)

The Prophet (sws) has also delineated the importance of *zakāh*:

Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) said: "He who was given wealth by the Almighty and he did not pay its *zakāh*, this wealth will be made into a bald snake for him, on whose eyes there will be two black dots, and on the Day of Judgement, his neck shall be shackled with this snake. Then he will clasp his cheeks and say: 'I am your wealth; I am your treasure.'"²⁹⁹

Abū Dharr al-Ghfārī (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) said: "A person who has camels, cows and goats and he does not pay the right imposed on them, then these [animals] will be brought before him on the Day of Judgement such that they will be very large and fat; they will stamp him below their feet and strike him with their horns. When the first will pass, the next will take its place. This will keep happening until the judgement is delivered for all the people."³⁰⁰

299. Ibid., 226, (no. 1403).

300. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 236, (no. 1460); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 400-

It is stated in the Qur'an that similar will be the case of those heads and instances in which wealth should be spent besides *zakāh* about which the Almighty directed people to spend money:

وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنُزُونَ الْذَّهَبَ وَالْفُضَّةَ وَلَا يُنفِقُوهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرُهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ يَوْمَ يُحْسَى عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكَوَّى بِهَا جِهَافُهُمْ وَخُوبُهُمْ وَظُهُورُهُمْ هَذَا مَا كَنَزْتُمْ لَا نَفْسٌ كُمْ فَدُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنُزُونَ (٣٥-٣٤: ٩)

And to those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah give them glad tidings of a dreadful punishment. The day when in Hell their treasures shall be heated, then their foreheads, sides, and backs branded with them: "These are the riches which you hoarded. So taste then what you were hoarding."(9:34-35)

i. History of Zakāh

The history of *zakāh* is the same as that of the prayer. It is evident from the Qur'an that like the prayer its directive always existed in the *shari'ah* of the prophets. When the Almighty asked the Muslims to pay it, it was not something unknown to them. All the followers of the religion of Abraham (sws) were fully aware of it. For this very reason, the Qur'an has called it حَقٌّ مَعْلُومٌ (٧٠: ٢٤) (a specified right, (70:24)). Thus it was a pre-existing *sunnah* which the Prophet (sws), with necessary reformations, gave currency among the Muslims at the behest of the Almighty. The Qur'an says that just as the Prophet Ishmael (sws) directed his family to offer the prayer, he also directed them to pay *zakāh*: وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ (١٩: ٥٥) (he would instruct his family to pray and to give *zakāh*, (19:55)). To the Israelites, God said: أَنِي مَعَكُمْ لَئِنْ أَقْتَمْتُ الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنِي مَعَكُمْ الرَّحْمَةُ... (١٩: ٥٦) (I am with you if you are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh* ... I will erase your sins, (5:12)). About the prophets which belong to the progeny of the Prophets Isaac (sws) and Jacob (sws), the Qur'an says: وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فَعَلُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ (٢١: ٧٣) (and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds and to be diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*, (21:73)). The Prophet Jesus (sws) said about himself: وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيَا (٣١: ١٩) (and God has directed me to offer the prayer and pay *zakāh* as long as I live, (19:31)). The Almighty says in the Qur'an:

وَمَا تَغَرَّقَ الَّذِينَ أَوْتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنْفَاءَ وَيُقْيِمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقِيمَةِ (٩٨: ٤-٥)

And [those among them] who were given the Book [before] became divided only after such a clear sign had come to them. And [in this Book also] they had been directed to worship Allah, obeying Him exclusively with sincere devotion

and to be diligent in the prayer and to pay *zakāh* [and the truth is that] this is the religion of the Upright Nation. (98:4-5)

The Bible also mentions the *zakāh* just as the Qur’ān mentions it. It is recorded in Leviticus:

A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. The entire tithe of the herd and flock – every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd’s rod – will be holy to the LORD. (27:30-31)

It is recorded in Numbers:

The LORD said to Moses, Speak to the Levites and say to them: When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the LORD’s offering. (18:25-26)

It is recorded in Deuteronomy:

Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. (14:22)

At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year’s produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. (14:28-29)

When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. (26:12)

Jesus (sws) while referring to it said:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. (Mathew, 23:23-24)

ii. Objective of Zakāh

The objective of *zakāh* can be determined from its very name. The root of the word *zakāh* in Arabic has two meanings: “purity” and “growth”. It thus means the wealth given in the way of Allah to obtain purity of heart. It is evident from this that the objective of *zakāh* is the same as that of the whole of Islam. It

cleanses the soul from the stains that can soil it because of love for wealth, infuses blessings in the wealth and is instrumental in increasing the purity of the human soul. *Zakāh* is the minimum financial obligation on a person of spending his wealth in the way of God; thus it does not win what spending in the way of God beyond it wins; however, merely paying *zakāh* is enough to attach a person's heart with the Almighty and greatly does away with indifference to the Almighty which so often comes in a person because of love for this world and its resources. In the words of the Prophet Jesus (sws): "For wherever your treasure is, your heart will also be."³⁰¹ This claim needs no arguments. One can experience it by spending his wealth anytime in the way of God.

The Qur'ān has stated this objective of *zakāh* in the following very appropriate words:

حُذْنِ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةٌ تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُرْكِيَّهُمْ بِهَا (١٠٣:٩)

[O Prophet!] Take *zakāh* from their wealth in order to purify them with it. (9:103)

وَمَا آتَيْتُمْ مِنْ زَكَاتٍ ثُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُضْعَفُونَ (٣٩:٣٠)

And that which you give as *zakāh*, seeking Allah's countenance, it is these people who will increase their wealth [in the Hereafter]. (30:39)

iii. Sharī'ah of Zakāh

Irrespective of the differences of the jurists in understanding the concept of *zakāh*, if the details of this directive which have reached us through the consensus of the Companions of the Prophet (sws) and their practical adherence, and which now stand validated through the consensus of the *ummah* are studied as regards their bases in the *shari'ah*, then they can be stated as:

1. Nothing except the following are exempt from *zakāh*:

- i. tools of production, trade and business
- ii. personal items of daily use
- iii. a fixed quantity called *niṣāb*

Zakāh shall be collected annually on wealth of all sorts, livestock of all types and produce of all forms of every Muslim citizen who is liable to it.

2. Following are its rates:

(a) *Wealth*: 2 ½ % annually

(b) *Produce*: (i) 5 %: on all items which are produced by the interaction of both labour and capital, (ii) 10 % on items which are produced such that the basic factor in producing them is either labour or capital and (iii) 20 % in items which are produced neither as a result of capital nor labour but actually are a gift of God.

(c) *Livestock*

(i) CAMELS

301. Mathew, 6:21; Luke, 12:34.

- From 5 to 24 (camels): one she-goat on every five camels
- From 25 to 35: one, one-year old she-camel or, in its absence, one, two-year old camel
- From 36 to 45: one, two-year old she-camel
- From 46 to 60: one, three-year old she-camel
- From 61 to 75: one, four-year old she-camel
- From 76 to 90: two, two-year old she-camels
- From 91 to 120: two, three-year old she-camels
- Over 120: one, two-year old she-camel on every forty camels and one, three-year old on every fifty camels

(ii) COWS

- one, one-year old calf on every thirty cows and one, two-year old calf on every forty cows

(iii) GOATS

- From 40 to 120: one she-goat
- From 121 to 200: two she-goats
- From 201 to 300: three she-goats
- Over 300: one she-goat on every hundred goats

3. The heads in which *zakāh* is to be spent were never unclear. It was always spent on the poor and the needy and on the collective requirements of the Muslims. However, when the Hypocrites in the time of the Prophet (sws) raised certain doubts about these heads, the Qur’ān unequivocally stated them:

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَاتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَالْعَامِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَالْمُؤْلَفَةُ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْعَارِمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ
اللَّهِ وَأَبْنِ السَّبِيلِ فَرِيضَةٌ مِنْ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَكِيمٌ (٦٠:٩)

Zakāh is only for the poor and the needy, and for those who are ‘āmisls over it, and for those whose hearts are to be reconciled [to the truth], and for the emancipation of the slaves and for those who have been inflicted with losses and for the way of Allah and for the welfare of the wayfarers. This is an obligation decreed by God and God is All-Knowing and Wise. (9:60)

Here are some details of the heads of *zakāh* mentioned in this verse:

- (a) الفُقَرَاءُ وَالْمَسَاكِينُ (*al-fuqarā’ wa al-masākīn*): the poor and the needy.
- (b) الْعَامِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا (*al-‘āmilīn ‘alayhā*):³⁰² the salaries of all employees of the state.
- (c) الْمُؤْلَفَةُ قُلُوبُهُمْ (*al-mu’allafat-i qulūbuhum*): all political expenditures in the interest of Islam and the Muslims.

302. A little deliberation on the expression shows state employees in reality are العاملين علىأخذ الضرائب ورددها إلى المصادر (those who collect *zakāh* and disburse it in its heads). Consequently, this is a very subtle expression which the Qur’ān has adopted here to convey its purport. No doubt, generally people have not been able to comprehend this expression; however the construction I have referred to above unfolds this meaning upon very little deliberation.

(d) فِي الرِّقَابِ (*fi al-riqāb*): for liberation from slavery of all kinds.

(e) الغَارِمِينَ (*al-ghārimīn*): for helping people who are suffering economic losses, or are burdened with a fine or a loan.

(f) فِي السَّبِيلِ اللَّهِ (*fi sabīlillāh*): for serving Islam and for the welfare of the citizens.

(g) أَبْنَ السَّبِيلِ (*ibn al-sabīl*): for helping travellers and for the construction of roads, bridges and rest houses for these travellers.

4. One form of *zakāh* is the *sadaqah* of *fitr*. It is the food of a person that he consumes in a day and is obligatory on every person whether young or old, and is given at the end of Ramadān before the ‘īd prayer is offered. As per a narrative of Ibn ‘Abbās (rta), the purpose of the Prophet (sws) in making this mandatory for every Muslim was to cleanse the fasts from the effects of lewd and nonsensical talk and to provide food to the poor on ‘īd day.³⁰³ In the time of the Prophet (sws), it was generally given in the form of grain. Consequently, he had fixed its quantity at one *ṣā‘* which is equivalent to about 2.5 kg:

فَرَضَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ زَكَاةَ الْفِطْرِ صَاعًا مِنْ شَعِيرٍ عَلَى الْعَبْدِ وَالْحُرْرِ
وَالذُّكَرِ وَالْأُنْثَى وَالصَّغِيرِ وَالكَبِيرِ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَأَمْرَ بِهَا أَنْ تُؤْتَى قَبْلَ خُرُوجِ النَّاسِ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ

The Prophet has regarded the *sadaqah* of *fitr* as obligatory on every Muslim. It is one *ṣā‘* of dates or one *ṣā‘* of barley for every individual whether he is a free man or slave, man or woman, old or young and directed Muslims that it should be paid before people go out for the prayer.³⁰⁴

If a state takes *zakāh* from its Muslim citizens, then there will be those who would collect it and those who would pay it. The Prophet (sws) has given advice to both: those who pay it should try to please collectors who come to them even if they are subjected to some excess³⁰⁵ and the collectors should not embezzle the money;³⁰⁶ moreover, they should not try to extract the best things owned in wealth and should save themselves from the prayer of the oppressed because there is no barrier between it and the Almighty.³⁰⁷

This is all as far as the *shari‘ah* regarding *zakāh* is concerned. However, since there exist some general misconceptions about it, the following points must remain in consideration:

Firstly, there is no basis in the Qur’ān and Sunnah for the condition of ثلیک ذاتی (personal-possession) imposed by our jurists. Therefore, just as *zakāh* can be given in the personal possession of an individual, it can also be spent on projects of his welfare.³⁰⁸

303. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 114, (no. 1609); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 403, (no. 1827).

304. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 244-245, (no. 1503).

305. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 400, (no. 2298); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 108, (no. 1589).

306. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 824, (no. 4743).

307. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 243, (no. 1496); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 31, (no. 121).

308. For a detailed discourse on this topic, see: Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tawdīḥāt*, 1st ed.

Secondly, the reason for the Prophet's (sws) prohibition for receiving *zakāh* for himself was that a portion from the *fay* wealth was reserved for him and his family.³⁰⁹ This portion remained reserved for this purpose for a long a period after him; however, such an arrangement could not have been forever nor was there any need for it to be forever. Consequently, the needs of the indigent and the poor of the Banū Hāshim can now also be fulfilled without any hesitation with the *zakāh* money.

Thirdly, a state can exempt certain things from *zakāh* keeping in view the circumstances. It also has the authority to fix a statutory exemption (*niṣāb*) on things on which it collects *zakāh*. For this purpose, the Prophet (sws) fixed a *niṣāb* for it in wealth, produce and livestock.

This *niṣāb* is as follows:

- (1) *Wealth*: 5 *uqiyahs* / 642 grams of silver
- (2) *Produce*: 5 *wasaqs* / 653 kilograms of dates
- (3) *Livestock*: 5 camels, 30 cows, 40 goats

He is reported to have said:

لَيْسَ فِيمَا دُونَ خَمْسَةَ أَوْ سُقُّيْرٍ مِنَ التَّمْرِ صَدَقَةٌ وَلَيْسَ فِيمَا دُونَ خَمْسٍ أَوْ أَقِيْرٍ مِنَ الْوَرْقِ صَدَقَةٌ وَلَيْسَ
فِيمَا دُونَ خَمْسٍ دَوْدٍ مِنَ الْأَبَلِ صَدَقَةٌ

There is no *zakāh* below five *wasaqs* of dates; there is no *zakāh* below five *uqiyahs* of silver and there is no *zakāh* below five camels.³¹⁰

Fourthly, if the basis of the directive is taken in consideration, industrial produce of all forms, production of all forms based on various skills, rent, salaries (service charges) and fees of all forms obtained in various ventures must be classified as produce and not as wealth; therefore, the *zakāh* imposed on them should be based on the rates specified by the *sharī'ah* for land produce.

Fifthly, according to the above mentioned principle, *zakāh* on leased-out houses, properties and other rented items should be that which is levied on produce, and if they are not rented out, its rate should be that which is levied on wealth.

3. The Fast

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقَوْنَ أَيَّامًا
مَعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّهُ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخْرَ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ فِدْيَةٌ طَعَامٌ

(Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1956), 107-173.

309. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-sahīh*, 241-242, (no. 1485); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-sahīh*, 435-437, (nos. 2473, 2481).

310. Mālik ibn Anas, *Al-Mu'aṭṭā*, 156-157, (no. 683).

مَسْكِينٌ فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِلنَّاسِ وَبِيَنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانَ فَمَنْ شَهَدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَإِلَيْهِ مَوْظِعُهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعَدَةٌ مِّنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ وَتِكْمِلُوا الْعِدَةَ وَلَا تَكُبُرُوا إِلَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَلَا كُلُّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٢: ١٨٣-١٨٥)

Believers! Fasting has been made obligatory upon you as it was made upon those before you so that you become fearful of God. These are but a few days, but if any one among you is ill or on a journey, let him fast a similar number of days later; and those who have the capacity [to feed a needy] should feed a needy in place of it. Then he who does a virtuous deed of his own accord, it is better for him and if you fast, then this is even better for you if you but knew. It is the month of Ramaḍān in which the Qur’ān was revealed, as a book of guidance for mankind and in the form of manifest arguments which are a means of total guidance and a means of distinguishing right from wrong. Therefore, whoever among you is present in this month, he should fast. And he who is ill or on a journey should fast a similar number of days later on. [This concession is because] God desires ease for you and not discomfort. And [the permission given to travellers and the sick to feed the needy has been withdrawn because] you can complete the fasts [and thus not be deprived of the blessings of fasting] and [for this purpose the month of Ramaḍān has been fixed so that in the form of the Qur’ān] the guidance God has bestowed upon you, you glorify God and express your gratitude to Him. (2:183-185)

After the prayer and the *zakāh*, the fast is the next important worship ritual of Islam. In the Arabic language, the word used for it is صُومُ (sawm), which literally means “to abstain from something” and “to give up something”. In Arabia, when horses were kept hungry in order to train and instruct them, the Arabs called this state as the صُومُ of the horses. As a term of the Islamic *shari'ah*, it refers to the state of a person in which he is required to abstain from eating and drinking and from marital relations with certain limits and conditions.

A person expresses himself through deeds and practices; hence when his emotions of worship for the Almighty relate to his deeds and practices then these emotions, besides manifesting in worshipping Him, also manifest in obeying His commands. Fasts are a symbolic expression of this obedience. While fasting, a person, at the behest of His lord, gives up things which are originally allowed to him to win the pleasure of his lord; he thus becomes an embodiment of obedience and through his practice acknowledges the fact that there is nothing greater than the command of God. So if the Almighty forbids him things perfectly allowed by innate guidance, then it is only befitting for a person who is the servant of his Creator to obey Him without any hesitation whatsoever.

A little deliberation reveals that this state of a person in which he experiences and acknowledges the power, magnificence and exaltedness of the Almighty is a

true expression of gratitude from him. On this very basis, the Qur’ān says that the fast glorifies the Almighty and is a means through which gratitude can be shown to Him: The Qur’ān says that for this very purpose the month of Ramadān was set apart because in this month the Qur’ān was revealed as a guide for human intellect having clear arguments to distinguish right from wrong so that people could glorify God and express their gratitude to Him. The words are: وَلَتَكُبُرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَى مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (and so that you glorify God and express your gratitude to Him). While referring to this essence of the fast, it has been said that a fast is for Allah and only He will reward a person for it. In other words, when without any reason a person merely at the command of his Creator also forbids himself things which are not forbidden, then the Almighty out of His graciousness will reward him without measure and such will be this immense reward that he will flourish and prosper. Abū Hurayrah (rta) reports from the Prophet (sws): “Whatever pious deed a person does, he is rewarded from ten to seven hundred times but the fast is an exception to this. The Almighty says: فَإِنَّهُ لِي وَأَنَا أَحْرِي بِهِ (it is for Me and only I will reward [a person] for it) because he gave up eating and drinking and abstained from sexual desires for My sake.”³¹¹ It is also reported that for persons who fast, there are two occasions of happiness: one when they break their fast and the other when they will meet their Lord.³¹² It is evident from these narratives how important the fast is to the Almighty. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

لَخُلُوفُ فِيمِ الصَّائِمِ أَطْيَبُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ رِيحِ الْمِسْكِ

The smell of the mouth of a person who fasts is more pleasant to God than musk.³¹³

إِنَّ فِي الْجَنَّةِ بَابًا يُقَالُ لَهُ الرَّيَانُ يَدْخُلُ مِنْهُ الصَّائِمُونَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا يَدْخُلُ مِنْهُ أَحَدٌ غَيْرُهُمْ يُقَالُ أَيْنَ الصَّائِمُونَ فَيَقُولُونَ لَا يَدْخُلُ مِنْهُ أَحَدٌ غَيْرُهُمْ فَإِذَا دَخَلُوا أُعْلَقُ فَلَمْ يَدْخُلْ مِنْهُ أَحَدٌ

There is a door in Paradise called *rayyān*. People who fast will enter Paradise from this door on the Day of Judgement. No other person will be able to pass through this door. It shall be asked: “Where are the people who fast?” At this, they will get up and no one else will enter with them. Once they will enter [Paradise], it shall be closed. No one else after them would be able to pass through it.³¹⁴

According to the *shari‘ah*, the excellence a person can attain in this ritual of worship is that while fasting he imposes certain other restrictions on himself and

311. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 304-305, (no. 1894); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 469, (no. 2707).

312. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 306, (no. 1904); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 469, (no. 2707).

313. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 304-305, (no. 1894).

314. Ibid., 305, (no. 1896).

confines himself to a mosque for a few days to worship the Almighty as much as he can. In religious terminology, this is called اعْتِكَاف (*i’tikāf*). Though this worship ritual is not incumbent upon the believers like the fasts of Ramadān, it occupies great importance viz-a-viz purification of the soul. The cherished state which arises by combining the prayer and the fast with recitals of the Qur’ān and the feeling of being solely devoted to the Almighty having no one around helps achieve the objective of the fast in the very best way. For this very reason, the Prophet (sws) would sit in *i’tikāf* in the Masjid-i Nabawī every year³¹⁵ in the last ten days of Ramadān and would devote all his time to praying to the Almighty, kneeling and prostrating before Him and reciting the Qur’ān. ‘Ā’ishah (rta) narrates:

كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا دَخَلَ الْعَشْرَ شَدَّ مُنْزَرَةً وَأَحْيَا يَنِيلَهُ وَأَبْقَطَ أَهْلَهُ

When the last ten days of Ramadān would arrive, the Prophet (sws) would fully prepare himself to worship the Almighty. He would worship the Almighty late in the night and would wake up his family members for this as well.³¹⁶

The ritual of the fast is incumbent upon the Muslims in the month of Ramadān. No doubt, one is caught up by many lures and attractions of this world; the Prophet (sws), however, has informed us that in this month the Almighty out of His grace stops the devils among the jinn-folk from misleading mankind. It is narrated: “When Ramadān comes the doors of Paradise are opened and the doors of Hell are closed and the devils are enchained.”³¹⁷ Consequently, there is an opportunity in this month for every person to strive to attain success and salvation without any external hindrance. Some narratives mention the reward of fasting as forgiveness of all the sins of a person. This is in accordance with the general principle of repentance as mentioned in the Qur’ān. However, specifically regarding Ramadān, the Prophet (sws) has given glad tidings of fasting in the following words:

مَنْ صَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفْرَانُهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنبٍ

A person who fasts in Ramadān with faith and while holding himself accountable to God, his previous sins are forgiven.³¹⁸

مَنْ قَامَ رَمَضَانَ إِيمَانًا وَاحْتِسَابًا غُفْرَانُهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنبٍ

A person who prays during the night in Ramadān with faith and while holding himself accountable to God, his previous sins are forgiven.³¹⁹

315. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 324-325, (nos. 2025, 2026); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 483, (no. 2782).

316. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 324, (no. 2024).

317. Ibid., 304, (no. 1899).

318. Ibid., 497, (no. 3009).

319. Ibid., 9, (no. 37).

Precisely, the same glad tidings are given for praying at night during the *laylah al-qadr*.³²⁰ It was in this night that the revelation of the Qur‘ān began and the Almighty has informed us that angels and Gabriel descend in this night with permission in all affairs. Since important decisions are made in this night, the extent of the blessings and favours of the Almighty and His nearness which can be achieved in this night cannot be achieved in a thousand other nights. On these very grounds, the Qur‘ān says: (٩٧ : ٣) لَيْلَةُ الْقُدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ (better is this night in which destinies are decided than a thousand months, (97:3)) The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that one should try to seek the *laylah al-qadr* in the last ten days of Ramadān particularly in the nights which begin with an odd number.³²¹

What is the importance of fixing certain periods of time for worship? Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī answers this question in the following words:

... just as in this material world seasons, climates and time occupy importance, they do so in the spiritual world as well. Just as in this material world there is a certain season and climate in a certain part of the year in which the seeds of a particular crop must be sown if they are to sprout, and any negligence to these factors will not yield the required produce in some other periods of time however much one tries; likewise, in the spiritual world also, there are special days and times of the year which are set aside for special acts of worship. If they are offered during them, only then the required results are obtained, and any ignorance in this regard cannot be compensated for in other periods of time even if their span is extended. A few examples will make this matter more clear: to offer the Friday prayer, a certain day has been set aside; similarly, a particular month has been fixed for fasting; for the offering of *hajj* and its rites too certain days have been appointed by the Almighty. The time for standing in ‘arafah has also been prescribed by the Almighty. All these acts of worship have been made conditional to certain periods of time, during which their performance yields a reward that cannot be estimated. If these times are not utilized for these acts of worship, they fail to reap the blessings they have.³²²

i. History of the Fast

Like the prayer, the fast is also an ancient ritual of worship. In the above quoted verses of Sūrah Baqarah, it is mentioned that fasting has been made obligatory for the Muslims, just as it was made so for earlier peoples. Consequently, this is a reality that as a ritual of worship that trains and disciplines the soul, it has existed in various forms in all religions.

320. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 306, (no. 1901); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 308, (no. 1781).

321. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 323-324, (nos. 2016, 2017, 2020); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 479-480, (nos. 2763, 2764, 2769).

322. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur‘ān*, vol. 9, 468.

The civilizations of Nineveh and Babylon are very ancient. Once these places were inhabited by the Assyrians. The Prophet Jonah (sws) was sent to them. Initially, these people rejected Jonah (sws) but later professed faith in him. On this occasion, their repentance and turning back has been mentioned in the Bible in the following words:

The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. (Jonah, 3:5-8)

In the Arabia of pre-Islamic times, the fast was a well known ritual of worship. The mere existence of the word صوم (*ṣawm*) in Arabic is evidence enough to show that the Arabs were fully aware of it. Dr Jawwād ‘Alī writes:

Some narratives mention that the Quraysh used to fast on the day of ‘Āshūr. On this day, they would gather, celebrate ‘īd and enshroud the Ka‘bah. According to the historians, they fasted on this day to atone for a sin they had committed in the days of *jāhiliyyah* – a sin whose burden laid heavily upon them. They would fast on this day to express their gratitude to God for saving them from the evil consequences of this sin. It is mentioned in certain narratives that Muhammad (sws) would also fast on this day before his prophethood ... another reason that historians have cited for this fast observed by the Quraysh is that when once they were struck with famine, the Almighty rescued them from it, and in order to show their gratitude to Him they started to observe this fast.³²³

In the *shari‘ah* of the People of the Book too, the fast is a common worship ritual. The Bible mentions fasts at a number of places, and besides using this word, it has used certain other expressions like “to sadden one’s self” and “self-denial” to connote it.

It is recorded in Exodus:

Then the LORD said to Moses: ‘Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel’. Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant – the Ten Commandments. (34:27-28)

323. Jawwād ‘Alī, *Al-Muṣṣal fī tārīkh al-‘arab qabl al-islām*, vol. 2, 339-340.

It is recorded in Leviticus:

This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must sadden and not do any work – whether native born or an alien living among you – because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins. It is a sabbath of rest, and you must sadden yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance. (16: 29-31)

It is recorded in Judges:

Then the Israelites, all the people, went up to Bethel, and there they sat weeping before the LORD. They fasted that day until evening and presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to the LORD. (20:26)

It is recorded in Samuel:

They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the LORD and the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. (2 Samuel 1:12)

David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and went into his house and spent the nights lying on the ground. (2 Samuel 12:16)

It is recorded in Nehemiah:

On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and having dust on their heads. Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places and confessed their sins and the wickedness of their fathers. (9:1-2)

It is recorded in the Psalms:

Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth and humbled myself with fasting.
When my prayers returned to me unanswered. (35:13)

It is recorded in Jeremiah:

So you go to the house of the Lord on a day of fasting and read to the people from the scroll the words of the Lord that you wrote as I dictated. (36:6)

It is recorded in Joel:

The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it? ‘Even now,’ declares the LORD, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting and

weeping and mourning.’ Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. (2:11-13)

It is recorded in Zechariah:

Again the word of the LORD Almighty came to me. This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months will become joyful and glad occasions and happy festivals for Judah. Therefore love truth and peace.’ (8:18-19)

It is recorded in Matthew:

‘When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (6:16-18)

It is recorded in Acts:

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said: ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’. So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. (13:2-3)

This is a brief history of the ritual of the fast. It is evident from this overview that like the prayer, the fast too was well-known to the Arabs. They were fully aware of its religious status and its details viz-a-viz its bounds and limits. Consequently, when the Qur’ān directed them to fast, these bounds and limits were not unknown to them: in fact, the words in which this directive was given, shows that they should observe it as an obligatory ritual which they knew as an age old ritual and an age old Sunnah of the prophets. The Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta) fasted on this very basis and Muslims after them are following this practice generation after generation. Viewed thus, the source of the fast is also the consensus and *tawātur* (practical perpetuation) of the Muslims. The only thing that the Qur’ān did was to make the fast an obligatory ritual, stipulating certain principles of lenience for the sick and for the travellers and to answer certain questions which were raised by the Muslims regarding the fast.

ii. Objective of the Fast

The objective of the fast as delineated in the above quoted verses of Sūrah Baqarah is to create the fear of God in a person. The Qur’ānic words used are *لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْفَعُونَ* (that you may attain *taqwā*). In the parlance of the Qur’ān, *taqwā*

means that a person should lead his life within the limits set by Allah and should keep fearing Him from the core of his heart that if ever he crosses these limits there will be no one except God to save him from its punishment.

How does the fast engender *taqwā* in a person? To understand the answer to this question, three things are necessary.

Firstly, the fast revives with full force the concept in the mind of a person that he is God’s servant. As soon as certain natural desires of the body are given up, the feelings of servitude spring forth and continue to enhance. These feelings totally overwhelm a person at the time of breaking the fast. Right from *fajr* to this time, a person does not consume a single bite of food or a single drop of water merely because his Lord has directed him to refrain from them. When the ritual of the fast is observed every year with vigilance, a profound reality is infused in a person and in fact becomes ingrained in his instincts: he is a servant of his Lord and it is only befitting for him that in other affairs of life also he submit to Him and fully accept His authority by making his concepts and deeds totally subservient to the Almighty. With this awareness, a person’s faith in the Almighty becomes a living and vibrant phenomenon. It is because of this that he does not merely believe in God but in fact believes in an All-Hearing, All-Seeing, All-Knowing and All-Wise Being Who is just and is fully aware of what a person conceals and reveals and in no circumstances can a person shun obedience. This is the foremost requirement for engendering *taqwā*.

Secondly, the fast is a means of making a person appreciate the fact from the bottom of his heart that one day he will be held accountable before the Almighty. Although all Muslims believe in this accountability, yet while fasting when the onslaught of thirst, hunger and carnal desire make life difficult for a person it is only this awareness of being accountable before the Almighty that stops a person from fulfilling these needs. For hours during the whole month of Ramaḍān, he abstains from these needs merely because one day he will have to face the Almighty. In the scorching days of summer when his throat becomes totally dry, he refrains from ice and water which he can easily access and consume; when spasms of hunger unsettle him, he desists from food which is at hand and when a husband and wife can easily satisfy their carnal desires, they abstain from doing so – all in order to please the Almighty. This abstention requires a lot of effort. Thus the awareness of being answerable to God is fully implanted in a person. A little deliberation shows that this is the second most important thing in engendering *taqwā*.

Thirdly, patience is necessary for *taqwā* and it is the fast that produces patience in a person. In fact, to be trained in the trait of patience, perhaps there is no easy and effective a way than the fast. In a nutshell, the trial that we have been put through is that on the one hand we are pulled by our strong physical and carnal desires and on the other hand we are required by the Almighty to live a life within the limits set by Him. This trial requires that we exercise patience at every step of our life. If the traits of honesty, veracity, justice, forbearance, forgiveness, keeping promises, perseverance on the truth, avoiding evil and eschewing lust are not present in a person, *taqwā* has no basis and without patience these traits

cannot be espoused in a person.

It is this *taqwā* which is the objective of the fast and the month of Ramaḍān has been fixed for it. It has been referred to above that the reason for this is that the revelation of the Qur’ān started in this month. What is the relationship of the Qur’ān with the fast? Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī answers this question in the following words:

A person who reflects will easily reach the conclusion that intellect is perhaps the greatest gift of the Almighty to man and the Qur’ān is even a greater gift because the intellect receives real guidance from the Qur’ān. Without the Qur’ān, intellect will continue to stumble in the darkness even if it is equipped with the eyes of science. It was only befitting that the month in which this great gift was given to mankind should be devoted to thank the Almighty and to glorify Him so that people are able to constantly acknowledge this favour. To express this gratitude and to glorify the Almighty, the ritual of fast was divinely ordained which is a means of engendering *taqwā*. It is *taqwā* upon which rests the basis of religion and its continued existence in this world and for whose followers this Qur’ān was revealed as guidance ... in other words, the wisdom of the Qur’ān should be understood in the sequence that only they can truly benefit from the Qur’ān who have *taqwā* and one special way of attaining it is through the fast. For this reason, the Almighty stipulated fasts for this month in which the Qur’ān was revealed. In other words, the Qur’ān is the season of spring for this world and the month of Ramaḍān is the season of spring and the crop which this spring nurtures and develops is the crop of *taqwā*.³²⁴

This objective is necessarily achieved through the fast. However, for this, it is essential that those who fast must refrain from certain wrongdoings which strip the fast off its blessings. Although these wrongdoings are numerous, all those who fast must at least be aware of some of them.

The first of these wrongdoings is that people tend to make the Ramaḍān a month of savouring their taste buds. They are of the opinion that they will not be held accountable before the Almighty whatever they spend in this month. If such people are affluent too, then this month becomes a month of partying and festivity. Instead of making this month a means of disciplining their desires, they make it a means of nurturing them and spend all their time in preparing meals for the *iftār*. Throughout the time of fast, they keep thinking of the delicious food that would fill their bellies once they break their fast. The result of this attitude is that they do not gain anything from the fast in the first place and if ever they do, they lose it.

One way to tackle this bad habit is to desist from making eating and drinking one’s prime concern in life. One should eat and drink to sustain one’s self and to gather enough energy for work and not make these needs one’s goal. A person should eat whatever foodstuff is easily available to him and thank God for this

324. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 9, 451.

provision. Even if he is served with something he does not like, he should not get angry. If he has been blessed with wealth, he should spend it on the poor and the needy instead of spending it on savouring his taste. Such spending will indeed add to the blessings of his fast. The practice of the Prophet (sws) in spending in the way of God is precisely this. Ibn ‘Abbās (rta) says that even in normal times, the Prophet (sws) was the most generous; however, in Ramadān, he would become an embodiment of generosity.³²⁵

The second wrongdoing is that since hunger and thirst make a person short tempered, some people instead of making the fast a means to control their temper make it an excuse to vent it on others. They lose their temper on their wife and children and servants in very trivial matters. They seldom control their tongue and if the situation gets worse they don't hesitate in hurling abuses and insults on others. So much so, at times they even thrash their servants. After such bouts of battering, they end up comforting themselves by saying that such things do happen in the fast.

The Prophet (sws) has advised a remedial measure for such an attitude: the fast should be used as a shield on such occasions instead of making it an excuse for being enraged. Whenever a person gets infuriated, he should remember that he is fasting. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: “The fast is a shield; whoever among you fasts should not indulge in lewd talk nor be overcome by his emotions; then if anyone abuses him or initiates a fight he should respond by saying: ‘I am fasting, my brother, I am fasting.’”³²⁶ It is a proven reality that if a person who is fasting reminds and checks himself in this manner on every occasion he is annoyed, he will see that gradually he is able to control the devil within him and he will be seldom overcome by it. The feeling of being victorious over the devils of his desire will produce satisfaction and a sense of superiority and this reminder initiated by the fast will become a means of his reformation. He will then express his anger on instances which really entail such expression. No one will be able to annoy him on all occasions.

The third wrongdoing is that people try to find replacements for the food and drinks and other things that they have given up – replacements which they think do not harm the fast in any way thinking that they make it easy for them to spend the time of the fast. They will play cards, read novels and plays, listen to songs, watch movies and gossip with their friends and if they are not able to do these, they would end up backbiting and besmearing others. When a person's stomach is empty, he relishes the meat of his brother in the form of backbiting. The consequence of this attitude is that at times people begin this activity in the morning and only at the time of breaking the fast do they leave it.

One way of tackling this failing is that a person should consider silence to be among the etiquette of keeping the fast and he should try to refrain from loose talk. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: “A person who does not desist

325. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 2, (no. 6); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1020, (no. 6009).

326. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 304-305, (no. 1894); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 468, (no. 2703).

from lying and practicing it, then the Almighty does not need him to abandon eating and drinking.”³²⁷

Another remedial measure is that a person should spend his spare time in studying the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth and in understanding Islam. He should make good use of this opportunity by learning some supplications mentioned in the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth. In this way, he will be able to save himself from trivial involvements and later these learnt supplications would help him in constantly remembering the Almighty.

The fourth wrongdoing is that sometimes a person does not fast for God; he fasts merely to protect himself from the criticism and condemnation of his family members and acquaintances and sometimes he undertakes the hardship of fasting to feign religiosity. This too damages the real objective of the fast.

One way to rectify this tendency is that a person should always keep reminding himself of the importance of the fast and also reminding himself of the fact that if he has left so many cherished things of life, he should do this for the sake of the Almighty. Moreover, he should also try to keep some optional fasts besides the obligatory ones of Ramadān and he should try to conceal these optional fasts as far as possible. It is hoped that in this way the obligatory fasts too would one day be kept by him purely for the sake of Allah.

Following are the optional fasts which the Prophet (sws) himself kept or urged others to do so:

(1) The Fast of ‘Āshūr (10th of Muharram)

Āḥādīth mention the blessings of this fast.³²⁸ The Prophet (sws) generally kept this fast³²⁹ and before the fasts of Ramadān were made incumbent, he would necessarily keep it and would urge and direct people to keep it and would be vigilant on them in this regard.³³⁰ According to history, one of the reasons for which this fast was kept was that the Quraysh used to keep it³³¹ and another reason recorded is that the Jews would keep it. When the Prophet (sws) asked the Jews, they replied: “This day has great significance for us; the Almighty liberated Moses (sws) and his people on this day and drowned the Pharaoh and his people in the sea; it is to express gratitude to the Almighty that Moses (sws) fasted on that day.” At this, the Prophet (sws) said: “We have deeper relations with Moses (sws) than you.” Consequently, he fasted on this day and also asked people to fast.³³²

327. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 306, (no. 1903).

328. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 321, (no. 2004); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 476-477, (no. 2746).

329. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 321-322, (no. 2006); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 459, (no. 2637).

330. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 321, 805, (nos. 2002, 4680); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 461, (no. 2652).

331. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 321, (no. 2002); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 459, 460, (nos. 2637, 2642).

332. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 321, (no. 2004); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 462, (no. 2658).

(2) The Fast of ‘Arafah (9th of Dhū al-Hajj)

Every Muslim is aware of the blessings of this day. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that if a person fasts on this day, then hopefully the Almighty will forgive his previous and next year’s sins.³³³ However, while offering the *hajj*, the Prophet (sws) did not keep this fast.³³⁴ A probable reason for this is that he did not prefer to add it to the hardship of the *hajj*.

(3) The Fasts of Shawwāl

The blessings of these fasts are also mentioned in the Ahādīth. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that whoever kept the fasts of Ramadān and then followed them up with six fasts in Shawwāl is like a person who kept fasts all his life.³³⁵

(4) The Three Fasts of each Month

The Prophet (sws) has urged Muslims to keep these fasts and has expressed the same words he said regarding the fasts of Shawwāl referred to above.³³⁶ ‘Ā’ishah (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) himself used to keep these fasts. However, days were not fixed for them. He would fast any three days of the month he wanted to.³³⁷ He, however, directed certain companions (rta) to keep these fasts on the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth of each month.³³⁸

(5) The Fasts of Monday and Thursday

The Prophet (sws) kept fasts on these two days as well. When people asked the reason, he replied: “The accounts of people are presented [to the Almighty] on these days.”³³⁹ He also said: “Monday is the day of my birth and on this very day began the revelation of the Qur’ān to me.”³⁴⁰

(6) The Fasts of Sha‘bān

Besides Ramadān, it is this month during which the Prophet (sws) would fast the most. ‘Ā’ishah (rta) says that she did not see the Prophet (sws) fast in any month to the extent he did in Sha‘bān.³⁴¹

333. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 476-477, (no. 2746). This refers to sins which do not relate to obligations towards one’s fellow human beings or which do not require repentance, making amends or atonement.

334. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 269, 320, (nos. 1658, 1988); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 459, (no. 2632).

335. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 479, (no. 2758); Abū Dā’ud, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 336, (no. 2433).

336. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 318, (nos. 1976, 1979); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 476-477, (no. 2746).

337. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 476, (no. 2744).

338. Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 333, (no. 2422).

339. Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 325, (no. 2360); Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 6, 261 (21246).

340. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 477, (no. 2747).

341. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 316-317, (nos. 1969, 1970); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-*

Apart from the above mentioned optional fasts, people can keep optional fasts whenever they want to. The Prophet (sws) directed the people who wished to fast more to follow the way of the Prophet David (sws) who would fast on alternate days.³⁴² The Prophet (sws) did not like people to only fast on Fridays³⁴³ nor fast all the year round.³⁴⁴ He also did not like people to fast during ‘īd³⁴⁵ days.³⁴⁶

iii. Shari‘ah of the Fast

The Almighty has directed Muslims to fast in accordance with the *shari‘ah* which has always existed regarding the fast in the religion of the prophets. The Qur’ān has stated that the fast has been made obligatory on the Muslims in the same manner as it was made obligatory on earlier peoples. A few number of days have been fixed for this ritual. This last statement is meant to raise the spirits. The implication being that if the blessings of Ramadān are kept in consideration, then 29 days or 30 days are not a long period; they are a short period and a person instead of becoming anxious should make himself ready to fully reap their benefits.

After these introductory statements, the concession in the directive is mentioned. It is said that people who are unable to fast because of illness or travel should make up their missed fasts by either fasting later or by feeding a poor person. This directive ends with the words: فَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ وَأَنْ تَصُومُوا (then he who does a virtuous deed of his own accord, it is better for him, and if you fast, then this is even better for you, if you but knew it). In other words, this atonement for not fasting is a minimum requirement which should be fulfilled. However, if a person feeds more than one needy person or does some other virtuous deed with them, then this will prove better for him. And to Allah even better is that a person instead of feeding others makes up the missed fasts in other days.

However, the very next verse beginning with the words شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ shows that the permission to feed a needy for a missed fast was later revoked. Consequently, the whole directive has been repeated after this verse while omitting the words beginning with وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ يُطِيقُونَهُ and ending with إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ. Since it is difficult to fast in other days than Ramadān, the Almighty did not make it incumbent until people got used to it. Hence, it has been said in the Qur’ān that

sahīh, 471-472, (nos. 2721, 2722).

342. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 318, (no. 1979); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 472-473, (no. 2729).

343. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 319, (nos. 1984, 1985); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 465-466, (nos. 2681, 2683, 2684).

344. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 318, (no. 1976); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 477, (no. 2747).

345. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 320, (nos. 1990, 1991); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 464, (nos. 2671, 2672).

346. The reason for the first of these is that after sometime it would have become a *bid‘at* (religious innovation), for the second is that it would have spoiled the balance in life and for the third is that it would have been totally out of place in such a poised religion.

feeding the needy for missed fasts has been revoked so that people could keep their missed fasts and are thus not deprived of the blessings hidden in them.

This then is the real directive of the fast. It seems that after receiving this law, certain questions arose in the minds of the Muslims. One of these questions related to having sexual intercourse with the wife in the nights of the Ramadān. This notion probably originated because among the Jews, the next fast would start right after one had broken his fast and they would consider eating and drinking and having sexual intercourse with the wife as prohibited. Muslims thought that they too would have to follow the Jews in this matter. However, some of the Muslims in spite of thinking so deviated from the view they held. This was something unseemly because if a person considers something to be a requisite of religion and still does not act according to it regardless of the fact whether it is actually a requisite or not, then this is not permissible to him. The Qur’ān has called this attitude as deceiving one’s conscience and has clarified:

أَحِلٌ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفَثُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ هُنَّ لَبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ عَلِمَ اللَّهُ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَخْتَانُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ فَالآنَ بَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَابْتَغُوا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَكُلُّوا وَاشْرُبُوا حَتَّى يَبْيَنَ لَكُمُ الْحَيْطُ الْأَيْضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتَمُوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى الظَّلَلِ وَلَا تُبَاشِرُوهُنَّ وَأَتَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَقْرُبُوهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقَوْنَ (١٨٧:٢)

It is lawful for you to lie with your wives on the night of the fast; they are apparel to you as you are to them. God knew that you were being dishonest with yourselves. He has relented towards you and pardoned you. Therefore, [without any hesitation] you may now lie with them and [without any hesitation] seek what God has ordained for you. And eat and drink until the white thread of the dawn is totally evident to you from the black thread of night. Then complete the fast till nightfall and do not lie with them [even at night] when you are stationed for *i’tikāf* in the mosques. These are the bounds set by God: do not approach them. Thus He makes known His revelations to mankind that they may attain righteousness. (2:187)

After this clarification made by the Qur’ān, the statutes on which the law of the fast and the *i’tikāf* is based are as follows:

1. The fast is abstention from eating and drinking and from having sexual intercourse with the wife with the intention that a person is going to fast, seeking God’s pleasure only.
2. This abstention is from *fajr* to nightfall; hence eating and drinking and having sexual intercourse with the wife during the night is permitted.
3. The month of Ramadān has been fixed for fasting; hence it is obligatory for every person who is present in this month to fast.
4. If owing to sickness, travel or any other compelling reason a person is not

able to keep all the fasts of Ramadān, it is incumbent upon him to make up for this by keeping in other months an equal number of the fasts missed.

5. Fasting during the menstrual and puerperal cycles is forbidden. However, the fasts missed as a result must be kept later.

6. The pinnacle of the fast is the *i‘tikāf*. If a person is given this opportunity by God, he should seclude himself from the world for as many days as he can in a mosque to worship the Almighty and he should not leave the mosque except because of some compelling human need.

7. During *i‘tikāf*, a person is permitted to eat and drink during the night but he cannot have sexual intercourse with his wife. This has been prohibited by the Almighty.

This law regarding the fast is substantiated by the consensus of the Muslims and by their perpetual practical adherence to it and the Qur’ān too has explained it to a great extent. Following are the explanations afforded by the words and deeds of the Prophet (sws) regarding the fast:

i. If the moon is sighted the Ramadān should begin. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: “A month can also be of twenty-nine days; so if you sight the moon, begin the fast and if you sight it break the fast; if the weather is not clear, end the month of Sha‘bān by completing thirty days.”³⁴⁷

ii. Fasts should not be kept just one or two days before the Ramadān begins. The Prophet (sws) did not approve of this practice and remarked that the only exception to this is the person who fasts on that day.³⁴⁸

iii. One should eat the *sahūr* (pre-fast meal) before beginning the fast. The Prophet (sws) asked people to eat it because eating it brings blessings.³⁴⁹

iv. During the fast, a person can be intimate with his wife in whatever way he chooses except for having sexual intercourse with her. ‘Āi’shah (rta) narrates that during the fast the Prophet (sws) would kiss her and press her closely to him.³⁵⁰

v. The fast can be kept in the state of *janābah* (ceremonial un-cleanliness). ‘Āi’shah (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) sometimes would begin the fast in this state and then do *ghusl* (the ceremonial bath) after the time of *fajr*.³⁵¹

vi. If a person eats forgetfully, then this does not break the fast. The Prophet (sws) remarked that it is Allah who has fed him.³⁵²

vii. It is better if the *i‘tikāf* is observed in the second or third portion of

347. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 440-441, (nos. 2503, 2514).

348. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 307, (no. 1914); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 441-442, (no. 2518).

349. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 309, (no. 1923); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 446-447, (no. 2549).

350. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 309, (no. 1927); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 450, (no. 2576).

351. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 310, (no. 1931); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 452, (no. 2589).

352. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 310, (no. 1933); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 471, (no. 2716).

Ramadān and is observed for full ten days except if the month is of twenty-nine days. It is evident that the Prophet (sws) too generally followed this practice.³⁵³

viii. Intentionally breaking the fast is a grave sin. If a person commits this sin, he should atone for it. The atonement which the Prophet (sws) prescribed was the same as the one the Qur’ān has prescribed for *zihār*. However, it is evident from the Ḥadīth that when the person expressed his inability, the Prophet (sws) did not insist on it.³⁵⁴

4. Hajj and ‘Umrah

وَأَذْنُّ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجَّ يَأْتُوكُمْ رِجَالًا وَعَلَىٰ كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجَّ عَمِيقٍ لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَعْلُومَاتٍ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ فَكُلُّوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعُمُوا الْبَائِسَ الْفَقِيرَ ثُمَّ لْيَقْضُوا نَفَثَتَهُمْ وَلْيُوْفُوا ثُدُورَهُمْ وَلْيُطْوَّفُوا بِالْيَتِيقِ (٢٢: ٢٧-٢٩)

And proclaim the pilgrimage among the people. They will come to you on foot and on the backs of lean camels from distant mountainous ways so that they are able to reach places of benefit and on a few appointed days invoke the name of God over their cattle which He has bestowed them. [So when you slaughter them] eat of their flesh, and feed the deprived beggar. Then let the pilgrims cleanse themselves of their dirt and fulfil their vows, and circle the Ancient House. (22:27-29)

It is this proclamation which was made centuries ago and it is in response to it that while uttering *لَبَيْكَ لَبَيْكَ (labbayk labbayk)* we travel to Bayt al-Ḥarām, the mosque built by Abraham (sws) in Makkah. It is this ancient mosque which in the words of Imam Farāḥī was the first house of God in this valley of Baṭhā and about which it had been decided from the very beginning that it would fend off all those who would deviate from *tawhīd*. Consequently, when its inhabitants took to polytheism and left it, they took away some of its stones in order to worship them. When Abraham (sws) after migrating from Babylon while trying to find this ancient mosque reached this location, he could only discover a shining stone from its previous construction. After he attempted to sacrifice Ishmael (sws), the Almighty directed him to rebuild this place of worship. So both father and son started digging the earth beneath this very historic stone. Once the ancient foundations became visible after some labour, they raised them and implanted this stone in one part of the erected structure. Ishmael (sws) was offered and devoted to this very house and thus regarded as its attendant and it was proclaimed in the name of the Almighty that people should come here to

353. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 324-325, (nos. 2025, 2026, 2027); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 481, 483, (nos. 2772, 2780).

354. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 311, (no. 1936); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 453, (no. 2595).

ceremonially devote themselves and revive their commitment to the belief of *tawhīd*. In religious parlance, these rituals are called *hajj* and '*umrah*'. In the religion of Abraham (sws), these two rituals are the pinnacle of worship. This is the highest position a person can attain in his zeal for worshiping the Almighty: he is ready to offer his life and wealth for Him when he is called for this. *Hajj* and '*umrah*' are symbolic manifestations of this offering. Both are an embodiment of the same reality. The only difference is that the latter is compact and the former more comprehensive in which the objective for which life and wealth are offered becomes very evident.

The Almighty has informed us that since the very first day Satan (Iblīs) has declared war on the scheme according to which He created Adam in this world: ﴿قَالَ فَبِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ثُمَّ لَا يَسْتَهِمُ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَثْرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ﴾ ("Because You have led me into sin," he declared, "I will waylay Your servants who are on Your straight path, then spring upon them from the front and from the rear, from their right and from their left. Then You will find the greater part of them ungrateful." (7:16-17)).

The Qur'ān (7:13-14) says that this challenge from Satan was accepted and His servants are now at war with their foremost enemy till the Day of Judgement. This is the very test on which this world has been made and our future depends on success or failure in it. It is for this war that we dedicate our life and devote our wealth. It is for this objective that many a time the prophets of God have called out: ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُوْنُوا أَنْصَارَ اللَّهِ﴾ (Believers! Be the helpers of God (61:14)). This war against Satan has been symbolized in the ritual of *hajj*. The manner in which this symbolization has been done is as follows.

At the behest of Allah, His servants take time out from the pleasures and involvements of life and leave aside their goods and possessions, then proceed to the battlefield chanting *لَبِيْكَ لَبِيْكَ* and just like warriors encamp in a valley.

The next day they reach an open field seeking the forgiveness of the Almighty, praying and beseeching Him to grant them success in this war and listening to the sermon of the *imām*.

Giving due consideration to the symbolism of waging war against Satan they shorten and combine their prayers and then after a short stay on the way back reach their camps.

Afterwards they fling stones on Satan and symbolically offer themselves to God by sacrificing animals. They then shave their heads and to offer the rounds of vow come to the real place of worship and sacrifice.

Then they return to their camps again and in the next two or three days fling stones on Satan in the manner they had done earlier.

Viewed thus, the *ihrām* worn in *hajj* and '*umrah*' symbolizes the fact that a believer has withdrawn from the amusement, attractions and involvements of this world and like a monk wearing two unstitched robes, bare-headed and to some extent bare-footed too has resolved to reach the presence of the Almighty.

The *talbiyah* is the answer to the call made by Abraham (sws) while standing on

a rock after he had re-built the House of God.³⁵⁵ This call has now reached the nooks and corners of this world and the servants of God while acknowledging His favours and affirming belief in His *tawhīd* respond to it by saying: لَبَّيْكَ اللَّهُمَّ لَبَّيْكَ.

The rounds of *tawāf* are the rounds of vow. This is an ancient tradition of the Abrahamic religion. According to this tradition, animals which were to be sacrificed or devoted to the place of worship were made to walk to and fro in front of it and in front of the altar. It is these rounds which have been referred to at various places by the translators of the Torah as the “wave offering” and “presenting someone”:

You are to bring the Levites before the LORD, and the Israelites are to lay their hands on them. Aaron is to present the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the Israelites, so that they may be ready to do the work of the LORD. After the Levites lay their hands on the heads of the bulls, use the one for a sin offering to the LORD and the other for a burnt offering, to make atonement for the Levites. Have the Levites stand in front of Aaron and his sons and then present them as a wave offering to the LORD. In this way you are to set the Levites apart from the other Israelites, and the Levites will be mine. After you have purified the Levites and presented them as a wave offering, they are to come to do their work at the Tent of Meeting. They are the Israelites who are to be given wholly to me. I have taken them as my own in place of the firstborn, the first male offspring from every Israelite woman. (Numbers, 8:10-16)

In the Arabic translations of the Bible, the words used for this are تُرْدَدُهُمْ لِلرَّبِّ and أَمَامَ الرَّبِّ which point to this underlying reason.

The *istilām* of the *hajar-i aswad* symbolizes the revival of the pledge. In it, a person while symbolizing this stone to be the hand of the Almighty, places his own hand in His and in accordance with the ancient tradition about covenant and pledges by kissing it revives his pledge with the Almighty that after accepting Islam he has surrendered his life and wealth to Him in return for Paradise.

The *sa‘ī* is in fact the *tawāf* of the place where Ishmael (sws) was offered for sacrifice. Abraham (sws) while standing on the hill of Ṣafā had observed this place of sacrifice and then to fulfil the command of Allah had briskly walked towards the hill of *marwah*. In the Bible, this incident is narrated in the following words:

On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, ‘Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.’ (Genesis, 22:4-5)

Consequently, the *tawāf* of Ṣafā and Marwah are the rounds of vow which are first made before the Ka‘bah and then on the place of sacrifice. It is evident from the Torah that just as they were made before sacrificing an animal they were also made

355. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Azīm*, vol. 3, 216.

after sacrificing it while holding a part of the slaughtered animal in the hands:

After you take the breast of the ram for Aaron’s ordination, wave it before the LORD as a wave offering, and it will be your share. (Exodus, 29:26)

‘Arafāt is a surrogate for the Ka‘bah where the warriors gather to battle against Satan, seeking forgiveness for their sins and praying to God to grant them success in this war.

Muzdalifah is the place where the army stops and spends the night and the warriors once again pray and beseech the Lord when they get up in the morning on their way to the battlefield.

The *ramī* symbolizes cursing Satan and waging war against him. This ritual is undertaken with the determination that a believer would not be happy with anything less than the defeat of Satan. It is known that this eternal enemy of man is persistent in implanting evil suggestions in the minds of people. However, if resistance is offered in return, his onslaught decreases gradually. Doing the *ramī* for three days first at the bigger Jamrah and then at the smaller ones symbolizes this very resistance.

Animal sacrifice symbolizes that one is willing to sacrifice one’s life for the Almighty and shaving the head symbolizes that the sacrifice has been presented and a person with the mark of obedience and eternal servitude to the Almighty can now return to his home. Shaving the head is an ancient tradition of the religion of Abraham (sws). Consequently, this law has been stated in the Torah that a person who has been offered and devoted to God should not shave his head until the days of the vow are complete:

During this entire period of his vow of separation no razor may be used on his head. He must be holy until the period of his separation to the Lord is over; he must let the hair of his head grow long. (Numbers, 5:6)

Now this is the law for the Nazirite when the period of his separation is over. He is to be brought to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting ... then at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the Nazirite must shave off the hair that he dedicated. He is to take the hair and put it in the fire that is under the sacrifice of the fellowship offering. (Numbers, 6:13, 18)

It is evident from the foregoing details how grand and exceptional the ritual of *hajj* is. It has been made incumbent once in the life of a Muslim who has the capacity to undertake it. Consequently, once, the Prophet (sws) also referred to its exalted status after faith and *jihād*.³⁵⁶ He is also reported to have said that a person who offers *hajj* and does not do anything lewd nor shows any disobedience, returns from *hajj* as if his mother has given birth to him today.³⁵⁷ Similarly, he has said:

356. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 7 (no. 26); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 51-52, (no. 248).

357. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 293, (no. 1819); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 569,

"An 'umrah done after 'umrah is atonement for the sins done in between them and the reward of the *hajj* offered with full sincerity is Paradise."³⁵⁸

i. History of *Hajj* and '*Umrah*

The history of the rituals of *hajj* and '*umrah* begins with the declaration of Abraham (sws) referred to earlier at various places in this section on *hajj* and '*umrah*. Never did these rituals cease to be offered thereafter. Before the advent of the Prophet Muhammad (sws) also, the people of Arabia would come to offer them in multitudes and after his advent too, this process has continued. At one place, the Qur'ān, while referring to this aspect has said:

وَلِلّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حِجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا (٩٧:٣)

And pilgrimage to the House has always remained a duty to God for all who have the capacity to make the journey. (3:97)

No doubt, the Arabs had introduced certain innovations in these rituals; however, it is evident from historical narratives that certain people among them were fully aware of these innovations and would offer *hajj* according to the way prescribed by Abraham (sws). It is narrated about the Prophet (sws) that before he was assigned prophethood, he was spotted in 'Arafāt by Jubayr ibn Muṭ'im. He was surprised on this because the people of Quraysh would not go beyond Muzdalifah while the Prophet (sws) had come as far as 'Arafāt. He says:

أَضَلَّتُ بَعِيرًا لِي فَذَهَبْتُ أَطْلُبُهُ يَوْمَ عَرَفةَ فَرَأَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَاقِفًا بِعَرَفةَ قَقْلُتُ
هَذَا وَاللَّهُ مِنْ الْحُمْسِ فَمَا شَاءَهُ هَا هُنَا

I lost my camel. On the day of 'Arafah, while trying to locate it I went up to the field of 'Arafāt and found that Muhammad (sws) was standing there.³⁵⁹ I said to myself: "By God! He belongs to the Quraysh; then what he is doing here?"³⁶⁰

It is evident from the above discussion that when the Qur'ān directed its addressees to offer *hajj*, it was not an un-introduced directive for them. They were fully aware of its importance in religion and were also aware of its rites and rituals. They would vigilantly offer it each year. Consequently, the Qur'ān only corrected these innovations and deviations and revived *hajj* in its true Abrahamic

(no. 3291).

358. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 285, (no. 1773); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 569, (no. 3289). This refers to sins which do not relate to obligations towards one's fellow human beings or which do not require repentance, making amends or atonement.

359. This incident is before Muhammad (sws) was assigned prophethood. However, since it has been narrated by Jubayr ibn Muṭ'im after he had embraced Islam, the word Prophet has been used by him.

360. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 270, (no. 1664).

form and shape. This revival thus constitutes the last chapter of the history of this ritual – written down by none other than the Prophet Muhammad (sws). From then onwards, all these rites and rituals of *hajj* are being transmitted generation after generation through the consensus and practical perpetuation of the Muslim *ummah*. No addition or alteration has been made in them. The reformations introduced by the Qur'ān at that time and which are eternally preserved in it now are outlined below:

1. Being the custodians of the Bayullāh, the Quraysh thought that they had the right to allow whoever they wanted to offer *hajj* and '*umrah* and likewise the authority to stop anyone from doing so. The Qur'ān has not accepted this right of theirs and has clarified that no tribe or family holds any monopolistic rights in this regard. No one has the right to stop any person who comes to the House of God for His worship and for *hajj* and '*umrah* whether he belongs to the Quraysh or to some other tribe, whether he belongs to the east or west and whether he is an Arab or a non-Arab. All have equal right to offer these rituals and no discrimination shall be made between a native and a non-native. The Quraysh should not consider themselves to be the owners and rulers of this House; they should offer their services for it and act as its custodians. It is their obligation that like Ishmael (sws), they too should make it a centre of worship for all the world and invite all people to come to it to reap its blessings:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ الَّذِي جَعَلْنَا لِلنَّاسِ سَوَاءَ الْعَاكِفُ
فِيهِ وَالْبَادِ وَمَنْ فُرِّدَ فِيهِ بِالْحَادِ بَطْلُمٌ نُذْكُرُ مِنْ عَذَابِ أَلِيمٍ (٢٥:٢٤)

[On the other hand] those who disbelieved and are now preventing others from the path of God and from the Sacred Mosque which We regarded for mankind, natives and strangers alike [are indeed committing grave oppression], and [the matter of this Mosque is such that] those who seek to practice something non-religious, some polytheism within it, We shall make them taste a grievous penalty. (22:25)

2. The filth of polytheism had been inducted in this foremost centre of monotheism. The Qur'ān has warned that when Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) were blessed with its custodianship and were asked to settle their progeny in this area, the first directive that the Almighty gave them was to keep it cleansed from such filth. This was an indication that the Quraysh too should follow suit, otherwise this great trust shall be confiscated from them and handed over to the rightful:

وَإِذْ بَعَثْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَا يُشْرِكَ بِي شَيْئًا وَطَهَّرْ بَيْتِي لِلظَّاهِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكْعَ
السُّجُودُ (٢٦:٢٦)

And recall when We made for Abraham the site of the scared mosque as an abode [with the guidance]: “Worship none besides Me. Keep clean My

House for those who walk around it, and those who stand upright or kneel in worship.” (22:26)

3. The month of Rajab has always been reserved for ‘umrah while the months of Dhū al-Qa‘dah, Dhū al-Hajj and Muḥarram have always remained specific for hajj. For the purpose of war, bloodshed and revenge, the Idolaters of Arabia would declare any of these forbidden months as allowable and any of them would be continued to be regarded as forbidden. Similarly, in order to bring the lunar calendar in accordance with the solar calendar they would add one month of kabīrah so that hajj may fall in the same season. In parlance, this is called *nasī’*. The Qur’ān has called it another addition in disbelief and has declared that it is absolutely baseless and should be done away with:

إِنَّمَا النَّسَيْءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِي الْكُفُرِ يُضَلُّ بِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُحِلُّونَهُ عَامًا وَيُحَرِّمُونَهُ عَامًا لِيُوَاطِّعُوا عِدَّةً مَا حَرَمَ اللَّهُ فَيُحِلُّوْا مَا حَرَمَ اللَّهُ رُبِّنَ لَهُمْ سُوءٌ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٣٧:٩)

The annulment of sacred months is only an addition in disbelief which has been made a means to misguide the disbelievers. In one year, they regard one month as allowed [for bloodshed] and in another year they regard the same month as forbidden so that they may make up for the months which God has regarded as forbidden, thus making lawful what God has forbidden. Their evil deeds seem fair to them. [They are disbelievers] and God does not guide such disbelievers. (9:37)

4. As per the Qur’ān (6:138-150), in relation to their idols, the Quraysh had forbidden certain animals on themselves and they would not sacrifice them. Similarly, owing to worldly interests, they had to a great extent altered the traditions of Abraham (sws) regarding this House. The Almighty also warned them on this attitude and informed them that only those animals are forbidden which the Qur’ān has referred to. Thus they should refrain from إِفْرَاءَ عَلَى اللهِ (imputing falsity to God) and revere all which has been declared sacred by the Almighty. Only such an attitude would ensure a safe future for them:

ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعَظِّمْ حُرُمَاتِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَأَحَلَّتْ لَكُمُ الْأَنْعَامُ إِلَّا مَا يُتَّلَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْتَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ حُنْقَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرُ مُشْرِكٍ بِهِ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكُ بِاللَّهِ فَكَانَمَا خَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتَخَطَّفُهُ الطَّيْرُ أَوْ تَهْوِي بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ سَحِيقٍ ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعَظِّمْ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ (٢٢:٣٠-٣٢)

Be diligent in these things and [remember] he who reveres the sacred things of God, it is better for him in [the eyes of] God. And the cattle are made lawful to you, except for those which have been spelled out to you before. So abstain from the filth of idols; and abstain from this falsehood [you attribute to God] dedicating yourselves to God, and not associating others with Him.

And [remember] he who associates other deities with God is like a person who falls from heaven and then birds will snatch him away or the wind will carry him away and throw him at some far-off region. Adhere to these things and [remember that] he who reveres the symbols of God [should know that] this is from the piety of the hearts. (22:30-32)

5. Benefiting from the services of animals reserved for sacrifice was generally considered as prohibited. Consequently, neither was the milk of animals reserved for sacrifice used for drinking nor were these animals used for carriage.³⁶¹ The Qur’ān pointed out that holding such animals sacred does not require this attitude. Until the time of sacrifice, these animals can be used in every way beneficial to man:

لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعٌ إِلَى أَحَدٍ مُّسَمَّى ثُمَّ مَحْلُّهَا إِلَى الْبَيْتِ الْعَرِيقِ (٢٢:٣٣)

You can put these [animals] of [sacrifice] to your use until an appointed time. Then they are to reach this Ancient House. (22:33)

6. Some Jews also lived in Arabia. Because of a weak tradition, they had prohibited the camel upon themselves.³⁶² The Almighty clarified that this was plain conjecture. Hence the camel could be sacrificed without any reluctance. In fact, if the Arabs sacrifice it, it will earn them great reward because this animal is very dear to them:

وَالْبَدْنَ جَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ شَعَارِ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ فِيهَا خَيْرٌ فَادْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا صَوَافَّ فَإِذَا وَجَبَتْ
حُنُوبُهَا فَكُلُّوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعُمُوا الْفَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَ كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرْنَاهَا لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ شَكُورُونَ (٢٢:٣٦)

And We have made the camels a part of God’s symbols. They are of much use to you. So pronounce over them the name of God while you draw them up in line. Then when they fall on their sides eat of their flesh and feed the uncomplaining beggar and the demanding suppliant. Thus have We subjected these [animals] to your service, so that you may be grateful. (22:36)

7. It was believed that the Almighty is pleased with the flesh and blood of a sacrificed animal. The Qur’ān has warned that this is mere foolishness. The Almighty is not pleased with the flesh and blood of these animals; rather, He is pleased with the piety which is engendered in those who offer such sacrifices:

لَن يَنَالَ اللَّهُ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ

361. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 273, (no. 1689); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 555-556, (no. 3208); Abū Ja‘far Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-bayān ‘an tā’wīl āy al-Qur’ān*, 1st ed., vol. 17 (Beirut Dār iḥyā’ al-turāth al-‘arabī, 2001), 185; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Azīm*, vol. 3, 220.

362. Deuteronomy, 14:7.

مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَيَسِّرْ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٢٢ : ٣٧)

The flesh and blood of these [sacrifices of yours] does not reach God; it is your piety that reaches Him. Thus has He subjected them to your service so that you may give glory to God for guiding you. [This is the way of those who are the righteous] and [O Prophet!] Give glad tidings to these righteous. (22:37)

8. The Marwah Hill is the place where Ishmael (sws) was prostrated for sacrifice. Since the Jews were not ready to accept this, they would keep creating various doubts about the *tawāf* of the Ṣafā and Marwah. The Qur'ān has admonished them on concealing this fact and unequivocally stated that these hills are from among the *sha'āir* (symbols) of God and circumambulating them is a virtue and no Muslim should feel any hesitation in doing so:

إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوِ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطْوَّفَ بِهِمَا وَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيْنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا يَبَدِّلُونَ بَيِّنَاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ الْلَاعِنُونَ (١٥٩-١٥٨: ٢)

Ṣafā and Marwah are indeed God's symbols. So it shall be no offence for those who come for *hajj* or '*umrah* of this Sacred House to walk around them. [In fact, this a virtuous deed] and He who does a virtue of his own will God will accept it and is fully aware of it. Those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance We have revealed [in this matter] even though We had openly proclaimed them for these people in our Book, it is they who shall be cursed by God and cursed by those who curse. (2:158-159)

9. After returning from *hajj* and while being in the state of *ihrām*, the Arabs would not enter their houses from the front; they would enter them from the rear.³⁶³ The reason for this queer act probably was the superstition that one should not enter from the doors from which one exited with the burden of sins; after being cleansed of these sins, this would be against piety. The Qur'ān regarded this to be a foolish act and asserted that this is not a virtuous deed; hence, it must be put to an end:

وَلَيْسَ الْبُرُّ بِأَنْ تَأْتُوا بُيُوتَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهَا وَلَكِنَّ الْبُرُّ مَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَأَتُوا بُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا وَأَنْقُوا اللَّهَ لَعْنَكُمْ فَنُلْهُونَ (٢ : ١٨٩)

This is certainly no virtue that you enter your dwellings from the rear [while returning from *hajj* and being in a state of *ihrām*]. In fact, virtue is that of a man who adopts piety. And enter your dwellings by their doors and keep fearing God so that you may attain salvation. (2:189)

363. Jawwād 'Alī, *Al-Muṣaṣṣal fī tārīkh al-'arab qabl al-islām*, vol. 6, 371.

10. In the days of *jāhiliyyah*, the ritual of *hajj* had assumed the form of a semi-religious entertainment. Consequently, people would take all sorts of assets and provisions to offer it but would give little importance to the fact that the real provision which one needs in this journey is the provision of piety. Little would they care that in this journey they should not indulge in lustful activity and not show disobedience and not engage in any altercation. These acts are against the very spirit of this great ritual. The Almighty has directed their attention to these aspects and emphasized that in this journey one’s greatest provision is piety:

الْحَجَّ أَشَهُرٌ مَعْلُومَاتٌ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوقٌ وَلَا جِدَالٌ فِي الْحَجَّ وَمَا تَفَعَّلُوا
مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَعْلَمُهُ اللَّهُ وَتَرَوَدُوا فِيْ إِنْ حَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَى وَأَتَقُونُ يَا أُولَئِي الْأَلْبَابِ (١٩٧:٢)

The months of the *hajj* are specific. So anyone who intends to offer it [by wearing the *ihrām*] should not indulge in lustful activities and refrain from being disobedient to the Almighty and abstain from altercation. And [remember that] whatever good you do, the Almighty is aware of it. And [in the journey of *hajj*] take along with you the provision [of piety] because the best provision is piety. And O men of intellect! Keep fearing Me. (2:197)

11. Owing to this apathy about *hajj*, people instead of worshipping and remembering Allah and celebrating His glory and exaltedness would indulge in business, trade and similar activities. The Qur’ān has clarified that there is no harm if a person engages in business during this ritual but in reality the sites of *hajj* are not meant for such activities. These great manifestations of knowledge and comprehension should remain specific to the remembrance of God:

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبَتُّوا فَضْلًا مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَإِذَا أَفَضْتُمْ مِنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِنْدَ الْمَשْعَرِ
الْحَرَامِ وَادْكُرُوهُ كَمَا هَدَأْتُمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٢:١٩٨)

[In this journey of *hajj*], it shall be no offence for you to seek the bounty of your Lord [but remember that Muzdalifah is no place of amusement and trading;] so when you come from ‘Arafāt remember God near the sacred monument [*mash‘ar al-harām*] and remember Him in the way He has guided you. And before this, you were undoubtedly in error. (2:198)

12. It had become the prerogative of the Quraysh to not go beyond Muzdalifah. They reckoned that they were the custodians and keepers of the Baytullāh; so it was not appropriate for them to cross the limits of the Ḥaram.³⁶⁴ The Almighty did not accept this privilege they granted to themselves and directed them to go to ‘Arafāt the way others do:

ثُمَّ أَفِيضُوا مِنْ حِيْثُ أَفَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْرِبُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٢:١٩٩)

364. Jawwād ‘Alī, *Al-Muṣaṣṣal fī tārīkh al-‘arab qabl al-islām*, vol. 6, 382.

Then [O People of the Quraysh! this is also essential that] you return from the place from where the other people return and seek the forgiveness of God. God is indeed Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. (2:199)

13. The days at Minā too were spent in eulogistic recitals, story-telling and in indulging in proving the superiority of one another.³⁶⁵ Not only this, some people would go as far as to view as great a ritual as *hajj* on the basis of their worldly benefits. On this occasion also, if they invoked God, they would ask for worldly benefits. The Qur’ān has admonished them on such behaviour and asserted that such people will have no share in the Hereafter:

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُم مَّنَاسِكُكُمْ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ أَوْ أَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا فَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتَنَا
فِي الدُّنْيَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ حَلَاقٍ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا آتَنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ
حَسَنَةً وَقَاتَ عَذَابَ النَّارِ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ (٢٠٢-٢٠٠: ٢)

After this when you have fulfilled the rites of *hajj*, remember God as you remember your forefathers; in fact even more. [This is the time of asking from God] but there are some who [at this instance also] say: “Lord, give us in this world,” and [then the result of this is that] these shall have no share in the world to come. But there are others who say: “Lord, give us what is good both in this world and in the world to come, and save us from the torment of the Fire.” It is these who will receive a share of what they earned and swift is God in taking account. (2:200-202)

14. The worst of these innovations was nude circumambulation of the Ka‘bah. There was a plank of wood placed in the Ka‘bah where people would place their clothes after undressing. Then it was only the graciousness of the Quraysh which would cover their bodies: their men would lend clothes to men and their women to women. However, those who were deprived of this generosity would circumambulate in the nude and would consider it to be an act of virtue.³⁶⁶ The Qur’ān prohibited this practice and stressed that at all places of worship a person must conceal his private parts and be properly dressed:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ (٣١: ٧)

Children of Adam! Adorn yourself with your clothes at all occasions of attending your mosques. (7:31)

ii. Objective of Hajj and ‘Umrah

The objective of *hajj* and ‘umrah is the same as their essence and reality viz. acknowledgement of the blessings of the Almighty, affirmation of His *tawhīd* and

365. Ibid., vol. 6, 390.

366. Ibid., vol. 6, 359.

a reminder of the fact that after embracing Islam we have devoted and dedicated ourselves to Him. It is these things whose comprehension and cognizance are called the benefits (*manāfi‘*) of the places of *hajj*. Consequently, the words of the verse quoted at the beginning are لِيُشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ (so that they are able to reach places of benefit). This objective is very nicely depicted in the utterances which have been specified for this ritual. It is evident that these expressions have been selected so that this objective is highlighted and fully implanted in the minds. Hence after wearing the *ihrām*, these words flow from every person’s mouth:

لَبَّيْكَ اللَّهُمَّ لَبَّيْكَ لَبَّيْكَ لَبَّيْكَ إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ وَالنَّعْمَةَ لَكَ وَالْمُلْكَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ

I am in your presence; O Lord I am in Your presence; I am in Your presence; no one is Your partner; I am in Your presence. Gratitude is for You and all blessings are Yours and sovereignty is for You only and no one is Your partner.

iii. Days of Hajj and ‘Umrah

No time has been fixed for ‘umrah. It can be offered throughout the year whenever people want. However, the days of *hajj* have been fixed from 8th to 13th Dhū al-Hajj and it can be offered in these days only. Since people have to reach the city of Makkah from all over the world, so in order to safeguard this journey the Almighty prohibited war in four months. These months are Rajab, Dhū al-Qa‘dah, Dhū al-Hajj and Muharram. Among these months, Rajab is fixed for ‘umrah and the other three are reserved for *hajj*. These months have always remained sacred and there was never any doubt about their sanctity. The Almighty says:

إِنَّ عَدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرُمٌ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ فَلَا تَظْلِمُوهُ فِيهِنَّ أَنْفُسَكُمْ (٣٦:٩)

God ordained the months twelve in number when He created the heavens and the earth. Of these, four are sacred. This is the true faith. Therefore do not sin against yourselves in them [by violating their sanctity]. (9:36)

iv. Sites of Hajj and ‘Umrah

The sites of *hajj* and ‘umrah are called the *sha‘āir* of Allah. The Qur’ānic words are: إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ (indeed the Safā and the Marwah are the *sha‘āir* of Allāh, (2:158)). This word is the plural of *sha‘īrah*, which means “a symbol”. In religious parlance, they connote certain manifestations which have been fixed by Allah and His Prophet (sws) to ingrain the comprehension of certain realities in our minds. The Almighty says (The Qur’ān, 22:32) that if these *sha‘āir* are revered, then this is an act of piety of the hearts.

Following is an introduction to these sites:

(1) Mawāqīt

Certain places have been appointed before the limits of Haram begin which can

only be crossed in a state of *ihrām* by those who want to offer *hajj* and ‘*umrah*. Whether at these places or near them, it is essential that *ihrām* be worn. In religious terminology, they are called *mīqāt* and are five in number. For those coming from Madīnah, the *mīqāt* is Dhū al-Hulayfah, for those coming from Yemen, it is Yalamlam, for those coming from Syria and Egypt, it is Juhfah, for those coming from Najd, it is Qarn and for those arriving from the East, it is Dhātu ‘Irq.

(2) Bayt al-Ḥarām

This is the same place of worship which the Qur’ān (22:25-9) calls الْبَيْتُ، الْبَيْتُ المسْجِدُ الْحَرَامُ وَالْمَقْبَقْ. Since its building is in the form of a cube it is also called Ka‘bah. It is located in the city of Makkah in Arabia. The Qur’ān (3:96) has also called it by the name Bakkah which means “an inhabited place”. It is situated about 277 meters above sea level and is surrounded by mountains from all four sides. Before the arrival of Abraham (sws), Makkah was uninhabited. An ancient tribe of Arabia called Jurhum ruled this area and lived in the whereabouts of Makkah. Ishmael (sws) was married to a lady Bint Muḍāq of this tribe.³⁶⁷ After the death of his son Nābat, the rule of this city came in the hands of this tribe and they subsequently ruled for several centuries. After that Banū Khuzā‘ah and Banū Bakr ruled this city. Almost a century before the advent of Prophet Muhammad (sws) when Hulayl ibn Ḥabashiyah, chief of the Khuzā‘ah tribe died Quṣṣayī ibn Kilāb annexed it and once again the Ishmaelites became the rulers of this city.³⁶⁸

When Abraham (sws) arrived at this place almost four thousand years ago at the behest of the Almighty the Bayt al-Ḥarām because of floods and with the passage of time had been razed to the ground and there was no indication of it. Through divine inspiration, he discovered its original foundations and with the help of his son Ishmael (sws) constructed a roofless building.³⁶⁹ This construction too could not remain intact with time and was destroyed. After that, first the ‘Imaliqah and then the tribe of Jurhum constructed it.³⁷⁰ When because of certain calamities the construction done by the tribe of Jurham was also demolished, the Quryash tried to reconstruct it but because of a lack of financial resources, it could not be constructed on its original Abrahamic foundations. This incident took place five years before Muhammad (sws) was assigned prophethood. Consequently, he also participated in its construction. In fact, according to historians, the dispute of the re-placement of the *hajar-i aswad* was resolved by an excellent plan he had presented.³⁷¹

It has been narrated that once the Prophet (sws) expressed his wish before

367. Abū al-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn ‘Abdullāh al-Suhaylī, *Al-Rawd al-unuf*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār ihyā’ al-turāth al-‘arabī, 2000), 47.

368. Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyah*, vol. 1, 93-104

369. Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makkah*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus li al-nashr, 1996), 58-66.

370. Ibid., vol. 1, 62.

371. Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyah*, vol. 1, 160.

Āishah (rta) that had it not been for the assurance and comfort of the Quraysh, he would have had the *Hatīm*³⁷² included in the structure thus instituting the Baytullāh on its original Abrahamic foundations.³⁷³ To honour this wish of the Prophet (sws), ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr during his rule demolished the structure constructed by the Quraysh and had it re-constructed. The structure was once again destroyed by stones hurled by al-Hajjāj’s catapults when he attacked ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr. After his martyrdom, at the behest of ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, al-Hajjāj had the structure razed down and once again rebuilt on the foundations set by the Quraysh.³⁷⁴ The structure is now intact ever since that event.

The *hajar-i aswad* is placed at one corner of this building. After it, the northern corner of the building is called the *rukni ‘irāqī*, the western corner is called the *rukni shāmī* and the southern corner is called the *rukni yamānī*. The door of the Baytullāh is about two meters above the ground. The wall between this door and the *hajar-i aswad* is called the *multazim*. This is like the doorstep of this divine shrine embracing which the devotees invoke and beseech the Almighty. The building is covered by a black cloth which is changed every year. There is a white stone in the courtyard of the building. It is said that Abraham (sws) stood on this very stone when he raised its foundations.³⁷⁵ Near this white stone is a natural fountain which is called *zamzam*. Those who come for the pilgrimage of this house, quench their thirst from it.

The precincts of the Baytullāh extend for several kilometres on all four sides and have always been known. All this area is called the Haram. It is forbidden to harm any human being, animal and even self-springing vegetation in this area. The Qur’ānic words (٢٨:٥٨ ، ٢٩:١٢٥) ﴿ حَرَمًا آمِنًا مَّنَابَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَ أَمْنًا ﴾ refer to this very status of this sacred area. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ هَذَا بُلْدُ حَرَمَ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَ هُوَ حَرَامٌ بِحُرْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمْ يَحِلَّ الْقِتَالُ فِيهِ لَأَحَدٍ قَبْلِيٍّ وَلَمْ يَحِلْ لِي إِلَّا سَاعَةً مِنْ نَهَارٍ فَهُوَ حَرَامٌ بِحُرْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا يُعْضَدُ شَوْكُهُ وَلَا يُنْفَرُ صَيْدُهُ وَلَا يَنْتَطِطُ لِقْتَلِهِ إِلَّا مِنْ عَرَفَهَا وَلَا يُخْتَلِي حَلَالَهَا

This is the city which has been declared sacred by the Almighty ever since He created the heavens and the earth. It is sacred till the Day of Judgement because of this sanctity declared by God. No one before me was ever given the permission to wage war in it. For me too, this prohibition was lifted for a part of day. Hence, it is sacred till the Day of Judgement because of this sanctity declared by God; neither will its thorny trees be cut nor its prey be chased for hunting nor will any thing found in it be picked except if it is

372. The portion left outside the structure of the building is called the “*Hatīm*”.

373. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 257, (nos. 1583, 1584); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 560, 563, (nos. 3240, 3249).

374. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 561-562, (no. 3245).

375. Al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makkah*, vol., 1, 59.

picked by someone in order to have it delivered to its owner and nor will its grass be cut.³⁷⁶

(3) Ṣafā and Marwah

These are two hills located very near the Baytullāh. It is on Marwah that the incident of Ishmael’s sacrifice took place. Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāḥī has fully unfolded this reality in his book, *al-Rā'y al-ṣahīḥ fī man huwa al-dhabīḥ* (*The Correct Opinion regarding who was Sacrificed*).³⁷⁷ As such, this is the real place of slaughter which has been extended to Minā for the convenience of the pilgrims. In the *tawāf* of this place of slaughter, each round begins with Ṣafā and ends on Marwah. In religious parlance, this is called *sa'i*.

(4) Minā

This is a vast field between two hills and is situated about five kilometres from Makkah. The pilgrims stay here after they return from Makkah on the eighth of Dhū al-Ḥajj and from ‘Arafāt on the tenth of Dhū al-Ḥajj. During their stay here, they complete the remaining rites of *hajj*.

(5) ‘Arafāt

This is also a vast field located about ten kilometres from Minā. It is here that the *imām* of the Muslims delivers a sermon and then till sunset the pilgrims stand ceremoniously (*waqīf*).

(6) Muzdalifah

On way to Minā, this is a second field where the pilgrims spend the night on their way back from ‘Arafāt. This is situated almost half way between Minā and ‘Arafāt. The limits of the Ḥaram start from here. For this very reason it is also called Mash‘ar al-Ḥarām (Mash‘ar al-Ḥarām). In the Qur’ān (2:198) also, it is mentioned by this name.

(7) Jamarāt

These are three columns situated in the middle of Minā. The largest of these is called Jamrah ‘Aqabah or Jamrah al-Ukhrā. The second and third are called Jamrah al-Ūlā and Jamrah al-Wustā respectively. After the pilgrims return from ‘Arafāt, they hurl stones at these columns.

v. Methodology of Ḥajj and ‘Umrah

The methodology which has been prescribed by the *shari‘ah* for *hajj* and ‘umrah is as follows.

(1) ‘Umrah

First the *iḥrām* should be put on with the intention of doing ‘umrah: Those

376. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 296, (no. 1834).

377. Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāḥī, *Al-Rā'y al-ṣahīḥ fī man huwa al-dhabīḥ?* Azamgarh: Dār al-muṣannifin, 1349 AH.

coming from outside Makkah should put on the *ihrām* from their respective *mīqāt*; locals whether they are Makkans or are temporarily staying in Makkah should put it on from some nearby place located outside the limits of the Ḥaram. And those who live outside the limits of Ḥaram but are located within the *mīqāt* their *mīqāt* is their place of residence. They can put the *ihrām* from their homes and begin reciting the *talbiyah*.

The recital of the *talbiyah* should continue till a pilgrim reaches the Baytullāh. Once he arrives there, he should offer the *tawāf* of the Baytullāh.

Then the *sa'i* should be offered.

If the animals of *hадī* accompany a pilgrim, they should then be sacrificed.

After sacrifice, men should shave their heads or have a haircut and women should cut a small tuft from the end of their hair and then take off their *ihrām*.

The *ihrām* is a religious term. It signifies that pilgrims will not indulge in lewd talk; they will not use any adornments, for example perfume; they will not pare their nails nor shave or cut any body hair; they will not even remove any dirt or filth from them so much so they will not even kill any lice of their body; they will not hunt preys nor wear stitched cloth; they will expose their heads, faces and the upper part of their feet; they will wear one sheet as loin cloth and enfold another around themselves.

Women, however, can even wear stitched clothes and cover their heads and feet. They are only required to expose their hands and faces.

The *talbiyah* implies the constant recital of these words:

لَبَّيْكَ اللَّهُمَّ لَبَّيْكَ لَكَ لَبَّيْكَ إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ وَالنِّعْمَةَ لَكَ وَالْمُلْكَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ

It begins right after putting on the *ihrām* and continues till a pilgrim reaches the Baytullāh. This is the only recital which the Almighty has prescribed for *hajj* and '*umrah*.

The *tawāf* refers to the seven rounds which are made around the Baytullāh in a state of cleanliness. Each of these rounds begins with the *hajar-i aswad* and ends with it and the *istilām* of the *hajar-i aswad* is done at the beginning of each round. It means kissing the *hajar-i aswad* or touching it with the hands and then kissing the hands. If the place is crowded, a pilgrim can just raise his hands in its direction or even point a stick or something similar towards it.

The *sa'i* refers to the *tawāf* of the Ṣafā and Marwah. This also consists of seven rounds which begin with Ṣafā. A complete round extends from Ṣafā to Marwah. The last round ends on Marwah.

Like animal sacrifice, the *sa'i* between the Ṣafā and Marwah is optional. It is not an essential part of the '*umrah*'. The Almighty says:

إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوْ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطْوَّفَ بِهِمَا وَمَنْ
تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلَيْهِمْ (١٥٨:٢)

The Ṣafā and Marwah are indeed two of God's symbols. So it shall be no

offence for those who come for *hajj* or ‘*umrah* of this Sacred House to walk around them; [in fact, this is a virtuous deed], and he who does a virtue of his own will God will accept it and is fully aware of it. (2:158)

The *hadī* refers to the animals which have been specifically reserved to be sacrificed in the Ḥaram. In order to make them distinct from other animals, their bodies are marked and collars are tied around their necks. For this very reason, the Qur’ān (5:2; 5:97) uses the word الْقَلَابَ (al-qalāb) for them.

(2) Hajj

Like the ‘*umrah*, the *hajj* too begins with the *ihrām*. Consequently, the first thing that a pilgrim must do is to put on the *ihrām* with the intention of offering *hajj*. Those coming from outside Makkah should put on the *ihrām* from their respective *mīqāt*; locals whether they are Makkans or are temporarily staying in Makkah or live outside the limits of the Ḥaram but are located within the *mīqāt* should put it on at their place of residence. This is their *mīqāt*. They can put on the *ihrām* from their homes and begin reciting the *talbiyah*.

Pilgrims should go to Minā on the eighth of Dhū al-Hajj and reside there.

They should go to ‘Arafāt on the ninth of Dhū al-Hajj. At ‘Arafāt, the *imām* will deliver the sermon before the *zuhra* prayer and the prayers of *zuhra* and ‘*asr* shall be offered by combining and shortening them.

After the prayer, pilgrims should celebrate the glory of their Lord and express their gratitude to Him, express His exaltedness and oneness and invoke and beseech Him as much as they can.

They should set off for Muzdalifah after sunset.

After arriving at Muzdalifah, the pilgrims should offer the prayers of *maghrib* and ‘*ishā* by combining and shortening them.

The night must be spent on the field of Muzdalifah.

After the *fajr* prayer, the pilgrims for some time should celebrate the glory of their Lord and express their gratitude to Him, express His exaltedness and oneness and invoke and beseech Him – just as they did at ‘Arafāt.

Then they should leave for Minā and once they reach the Jamrah ‘Aqabah, they should stop reciting the *talbiyah* and pelt this Jamrah with seven stones.

If the pilgrims have brought forth the *hadī* or if it has become incumbent upon them to sacrifice animals which have been devoted or which are a means of atonement, then these should be sacrificed.

After sacrifice, men should shave their heads or have a haircut and women should cut a small tuft from the end of their hair and then take off their *ihrām*.

After that the pilgrims should set off for the Baytullāh and offer the *tawāf*.

With this, all restrictions which the *ihrām* entails shall be lifted. After that, if a pilgrim wants, he can offer the *sa‘ī* of the Ṣafā and the Marwah – though this is optional.

Then they should go back to Minā and stay there for two or three days and then everyday pelt first the first Jamrah, then the middle one and then the last one with seven stones each.

Ever since the times of Abraham (sws), these are the rites (*manāsik*) of *hajj* and '*umrah*. The Qur'ān has made no change in them; it has only explained certain issues which arose – issues about which there was no clear directive given previously.

These issues are six in number:

The first of them is that showing reverence to whatever has been declared sacred by the Almighty regarding *hajj* and '*umrah* is a requirement of faith. This should be expressed and followed at all costs. If some other group violates this sanctity, Muslims too have the right to retaliate on equal footings. The reason is that keeping intact the sanctities ordained by the Almighty is a two way practice. One member of the pact cannot just maintain it on its own. The Almighty says:

الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَاتُ قِصَاصٌ فَمَنْ اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدَى
عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَتَقُولُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٢:١٩٤)

A sacred month for a sacred month; [similarly] other sacred things too are subject to retaliation. So if anyone transgresses against you, you should also pay back in equal coins. Have fear of Allah and keep in mind that Allah is with those who remain within the bounds [stipulated by religion]. (2:194)

While explaining this verse, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, writes:

... this verse implies that fighting in the forbidden months or fighting within the boundaries of the Ḥaram is a big sin. However, if the disbelievers disregard their sanctity, Muslims on account of *qisāṣ* also have the right to strip them of the protection that these sacred entities afford them. The life of every person carries great sanctity in the eyes of the *sharī'ah*. However, when a person violates this sanctity and kills someone, then he himself will be deprived of the right of sanctity of his own life to avenge his own deed. Similarly, the sanctity of the forbidden months and of the Ḥaram itself shall be upheld in all circumstances on the condition that the disbelievers also uphold it and do not oppress and tyrannize people during this time. However, if they unsheathe their swords in the forbidden months and in the sacred land of Makkah, then on account of *qisāṣ* they themselves deserve to be divested of the protection these months and this land hold for them. The verse goes on to say that just as the taking of *qisāṣ* for the forbidden months is necessary, the *qisāṣ* of other sacred entities must also be taken. In other words, if the disbelievers deprive Muslims of the right of protection that certain sacred things hold for them, Muslims too have the right as a result of *qisāṣ* to pay them back in equal coins or measure.³⁷⁸

Secondly, in spite of the permission for war, Muslims cannot take any initiative in violating the sanctities. These are the sanctities ordained by God

378. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 479.

and taking the initiative in violating them is a grave sin. In no circumstances should this happen. An attack on the Sacred House is an attack on the House of God; harming the animals which are marked for sacrifice to God and the people who have travelled to seek the bounty and pleasure of their Lord is like going after God. Hence, even animosity towards a nation should not lead Muslims to violate the limits in this regard. It should remain clear to them that the Almighty is stern in retribution for those who break promises and covenants – promises which He had made with people as a favour and as a means to grant them dominance:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُحْلِوْ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ وَلَا الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ وَلَا الْهَدْيَ وَلَا الْقُلَادَةَ وَلَا آمِنَ
الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ يَتَّسِعُونَ فَصَلَّا مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَرَضُوا إِنَّمَا ... وَلَا يَخْرُمُنَّكُمْ شَنَآنُ قَوْمٍ أَنْ صَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ
الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ أَنْ تَعْتَدُوا وَتَعَاوِنُوا عَلَى الْبَرِّ وَالْتَّقْوَى وَلَا تَعَاوِنُوا عَلَى الإِلْثَمِ وَالْعُدُوانِ وَأَنْقُوا
اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٢٥:٥)

Believers! Do not violate the symbols of God, or the sacred months, or the animals of *hadī* or [specifically those among them] who are marked with collars of vow or those who have set out for this House to seek God's grace and pleasure ... And if some people had stopped you from coming to the Sacred House, your animosity against them should not incite you so much that you cross the limits of the Almighty. [No, you must abide by these limits] and help one another in what is virtuous and pious and not in what is sinful and oppressive. And have fear of God because God is stern in retribution. (5:2)

جَعَلَ اللَّهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيَاماً لِلنَّاسِ وَالشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ وَالْهَدْيَ وَالْقُلَادَةَ ذَلِكَ لِتَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ
يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ اعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ وَأَنَّ
اللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٩٨:٥)

God has made the Ka‘bah, the Sacred House, a centre for the people and the sacred months, and the sacrificial animals and [especially those among] the animals which [as symbols] are adorned with collars of vow. This is because you may know God has knowledge of all that is in the heavens and the earth and God is aware of everything. Beware that God is stern in retribution, and that God is Forgiving and Merciful. (5:97-98)

The third issue is that the prohibition of hunting while a pilgrim is wearing the *ihrām* is only for animals of the land. Hunting sea animals or eating sea animal which have been hunted by others is allowed. This lenience is because if provisions become scarce in land travel they can be obtained by one way or another but in sea travel there is no option but to hunt animals. However, this permission does not mean that people wrongfully benefit from it. The prey hunted on land is prohibited in all circumstances. So if a person deliberately

commits such a sin, then he must atone for it.

There are three ways for this atonement:

A similar household quadruped animal to that which has been hunted should be sent to the Baytullāh for sacrifice.

If this is not possible, then the price of such an animal should be calculated and the amount spent to feed the poor.

If even this is not possible, then a person should fast; the number of these fasts should be equivalent to the number of poor a person has become liable to feed.

As far as the decision is concerned regarding the type of animal to be sacrificed in return, or if this is not possible, then determining of the price of such an animal or the number of poor which should be fed or the number of fasts which should be kept, it shall be made by two trustworthy Muslims so that no chance remains for the sinner to succumb to a wrong judgement:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِيَّالُوكُمُ اللَّهُ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الصَّيْدِ تَنَاهُ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَرَمَاحُكُمْ لِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَخْفَفُ
بِالْغَيْبِ فَمَنْ اعْتَدَى بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْتُلُوا الصَّيْدَ وَأَنْتُمْ حُرُّمٌ
وَمَنْ قَتَلَهُ مِنْكُمْ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَرَاءٌ مُثْلُ مَا قَتَلَ مِنَ النَّعَمِ يَحْكُمُ بِهِ ذُوَا عَدْلٌ مِنْكُمْ هَدِيَا بَالِغَ الْكَعْبَةِ
أَوْ كَفَارَةً طَعَامٌ سَيَا كِينَ أَوْ عَدْلٌ ذَلِكَ صِيَاماً لِيُذُوقَ وَبَالْ أُمُورِهِ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَمَّا سَلَفَ وَمَنْ عَادَ
فَيَنْتَقِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْهُ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو اِنْتِقَامٍ أَحَلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ وَطَعَامُهُ مَتَاعًا لَكُمْ وَلِلسيَارَةِ وَحُرُّمَ
عَلَيْكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَرِّ مَا دُمْتُمْ حُرُّمًا وَأَتَقْوِيُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ (٩٤:٩٦-٩٧)

Believers! God will definitely try you through the prey which you can catch with your hands or with your spears in order to see who fear Him without observing Him. Then he who transgresses even after this warning shall be sternly punished. Believers! Do not hunt while wearing the *ihrām* and anyone of you who deliberately does so, then he should sacrifice a similar animal in return to the one he had killed. This decision shall be made by two just men among you and this offering shall be sent to the Baytullāh or he shall, in expiation, either feed the poor or fast a similar number so that he may taste the evil consequences of his deed. God has forgiven what has been done in the past but if anyone relapses into wrongdoing God will avenge Himself on him. [This is the decision of God] and God is Mighty and capable of revenge. Lawful for you is the prey you catch from the sea and the sustenance it provides; a wholesome food, for you and for the seafarer. But you are forbidden the prey hunted on land as long as you are wearing the *ihrām*. [Keep abiding by this directive] and have fear of God, before whom you shall all be assembled. (5:94-96)

The fourth issue is that if the pilgrims are not able to reach the Sacred House and are stranded somewhere, then they can sacrifice a camel, cow or a goat and after shaving their heads, they can take off their *ihrām*. This will complete their *hajj* and ‘umrah. On the occasion of the truce of Hudaybiyah, this is precisely

what the Prophet (sws) did.³⁷⁹ However, this much should remain clear that whether the sacrifice is offered at such places or in Makkah or Minā, shaving the head is not permissible before it. The only exception to this is if a person is sick or he has some ailment in his head and he is forced to shave his head before animal sacrifice. The Qur’ān has allowed the pilgrims to do so in such circumstances but they should atone for this in the form of keeping fasts, or spending in the way of God or sacrificing an animal(s). The amounts of these acts of atonement are left to their own discretion. It is narrated that when the Prophet (sws) was asked about these amounts, he replied: “it would suffice if either a person fasts for three days, or feeds six poor people or sacrifices a goat.”³⁸⁰

وَأَتَمُوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ إِنْ أَخْصَرُوكُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا رُؤُوسَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ
الْهَدْيُ مَحْلُهُ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا أَوْ بِهِ أَذْيَ مِنْ رَأْسِهِ فَفَدِيَةٌ مِّنْ صِيَامٍ أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسُكٍ
(196:٢)

And [if the way to] *hajj* and ‘*umrah* [is opened to you, offer them with all their rites] for God only. But if you are stranded on the way, sacrifice whatever offering is available to you and do not shave your heads until the offerings have reached their destination. But if any of you is ill or suffers from an ailment of the head, he must atone for this either by fasting or by spending in the way of God or by offering a sacrifice. (2:196)

The fifth issue is that if those who have come from outside want to combine the *hajj* with the ‘*umrah* in one journey, they can do so. The way to do this is that they should first take off the *ihrām* after offering the ‘*umrah*. Then they should again put it on the eighth of Dhū al-Hajj and then offer *hajj*. This is a mere concession which the Almighty has provided the pilgrims to save themselves of the bother of two journeys. Thus they will atone for benefiting from this lenience. There are two ways for this:

They should offer the sacrifice of whatever animal is available to them from a camel, cow or goat.

If this is not possible, then they should fast for ten days: three during their *hajj* stay and seven when they return.

It is evident from the above explanation that what is pleasing in the sight of God is that one should make separate journeys for *hajj* and ‘*umrah*. Thus the Qur’ān has clarified that this lenience is not for those whose houses are near the Sacred Mosque:

إِنَّمَا أَمْنَتُمْ فَمَنْ تَمَّتَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى الْحَجَّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجْدُ فَصَيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ فِي

379. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 291-292, (nos. 1811, 1812).

380. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 292, (no. 1814); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 499, (no. 2877).

الْحَجَّ وَسَبْعَةٌ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ تَلْكَ عَشَرَةً كَامِلَةً ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلُهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ
وَأَتَقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٢:١٩٦)

Then in peacetime anyone among you who benefits from the ‘umrah till the time of *hajj* arrives, he should sacrifice any animal that is available; and if it is not available, he should fast for three days during the *hajj* and seven when he has returned. These are ten days in all. This [concession of combining *hajj* with ‘umrah in a single journey] is only for those whose houses are not located near the Sacred Mosque. [Follow this directive] and have fear of God and know well that God is stern in retribution. (2:196)

It should remain clear that those who want to avail this concession are not required to bring the *hadī* animals along with them; they can buy them from there on the day of sacrifice. The reason for this is that these animals shall be sacrificed on the 10th of Dhū al-Hajj and as is evident from the above discussion they cannot shave their heads unless this sacrifice takes place; as a natural consequence of this they would not be able to take off their *ihrām*. At the occasion of the last *hajj*, the Prophet (sws) faced this very situation. Consequently, he is reported to have said:

لَوْ اسْتَعْبَلْتُ مِنْ أَمْرِي مَا اسْتَدِيرْتُ مَا أَهْدَيْتُ وَلَوْلَا أَنَّ مَعِي الْهَدْيَيْ لَأَخْلَلْتُ

Had what has now become evident to me become evident earlier, I would not have brought the *hadī* animals along and if I had not brought them, I would have been able to take off my *ihrām*.³⁸¹

The sixth issue is that pilgrims can return from Minā on the 12th of Dhū al-Hajj and can also stay on till the 13th. The Almighty has said that both cases will incur no sin. The reason for this is that the extent of stay does not hold real significance; what does hold real significance is whether the time of stay however much it be was spent in the remembrance of God or not:

وَإِذْ كُرُوا اللَّهُ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَعْلُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ تَأَخَّرَ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ لِمَنِ
أَتَقَى وَأَتَقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ (٢:٢٠٣)

And remember God in these few appointed days [at Minā]. He who is in haste and departs on the second day incurs no sin, nor does he who stays on longer. [Yes, but] for those who truly fear God and have fear of God, and be aware that [one day] you shall all be gathered before Him. (2:203)

vi. Guidance provided by the Prophet (sws)

The previous discussion covers the directives of *hajj* and ‘umrah. However, the guidance we receive from the practices of the Prophet (sws) in this regard is as follows:

381. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 267, (no. 1651).

(1) *Ihrām*

When putting on the *ihrām*, the Prophet (sws) would sprinkle some perfume on himself. ‘Ā’ishah (rta) narrates that she sprinkled the perfume of musk on him before he put on the *ihrām* and also on the 10th of Dhū al-Hajj after he took off the *ihrām* when he departed to Makkah to offer the *tawāf*. She is reported to have said: “Even today, I see the glow [of the powder] of the fragrance where his hair parted.”³⁸²

While wearing the *ihrām*, the Prophet (sws) had scarification done, had his hair set and also washed his head.³⁸³ He also allowed people to tear their socks from below the ankles and use them as shoes in case they did not have shoes to wear and also allowed them to wear *shalwār* or *pājāmah* in case they did not have unstitched cloth.³⁸⁴

He did not approve of a person getting married or a person having someone get married or finalizing a marriage while wearing the *ihrām*.³⁸⁵

If a person dies in the state of *ihrām*, the Prophet (sws) has directed people to bury him in this state and has stopped people from sprinkling perfume on him or covering his head or face while burying him. He informed us that Allah will raise such a person on the Day of Judgement while that person is reciting the *talbiyah*.³⁸⁶

He similarly explained that no doubt hunting animals is forbidden in the state of *ihrām*; however, such a person can eat the animal which has been killed by someone who is not wearing the *ihrām* on the condition that he did not suggest or indicate to him to hunt down the prey.³⁸⁷ He also explained that this prohibition of hunting animals does not relate to harmful and dangerous animals. Such animals can be killed in the state of *ihrām* without any hesitation.³⁸⁸

(2) *Talbiyah*

Regarding the *talbiyah*, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: “When a Muslim utters the words: لَّمَّا كَتَبَكَ لَيْكَ, then the trees and stones to the right and left of him till the end of the earth also say these words.”³⁸⁹ Consequently, he is reported to

382. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 249, (nos. 1538, 1539); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 492-493, (nos. 2832, 2841).

383. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 296-297, 249-250, (nos. 1835, 1540, 1840); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 501-502, (nos. 2885, 2889).

384. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 297, (nos. 1841, 1842); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 485, (nos. 2791, 2794).

385. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 592, (no. 3446).

386. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 203, (no. 1267); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 502, (no. 2891).

387. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 294-295, (no. 1824); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 495-496, (no. 2855).

388. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 295, (nos. 1828, 1829); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 498, (no. 2868).

389. Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 425, (no. 2921); Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr*, vol. 2, 179, (no. 828).

have said: “Gabriel the trustworthy has directed me to say these words loudly.”³⁹⁰

Ibn ‘Umar (rta) reports that when the Prophet (sws) would go out for *hajj* and *‘umrah*, he would pray two *rak’āt* at Dhū al-Hulayfah, then would get on a camel near the mosque; when the camel would stop, he would begin reciting the *talbiyah*.³⁹¹

(3) *Tawāf*

There is only one *tawāf* of *hajj* which is called the *tawāf-i ifādah*; however, the Prophet (sws) has directed the pilgrims to offer another *tawāf* after offering *hajj* and *‘umrah* before they return to their homes. Ibn ‘Abbās (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that before departing the last thing everyone of you should do is this.³⁹² Women, however, who are passing through their menstrual cycles have been exempted by him from this and have been permitted to depart from Makkah without offering it.³⁹³

Before beginning the *tawāf*, the Prophet (sws) did *wudū*.³⁹⁴

Ā’ishah (rta) narrates that during her menstrual cycle and the Prophet said: “In this state, you can offer all the rites of *hajj* except the *tawāf*.³⁹⁵

Umm Salamah (rta) says: “I was ill; when the Prophet (sws) was told of this, he asked me to offer *tawāf* on a conveyance.”³⁹⁶

Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh (rta) says that when the Prophet (sws) offered the first *tawāf* after reaching Makkah, he ran in the first three rounds while shaking his shoulders and in the four remaining rounds he walked the way he used to walk.³⁹⁷ Then he advanced towards the Maqām-i Ibrāhīm and offered two *rak’āt* while standing behind it; he then came back towards the *ḥajar-i aswad* and did the *istilām* and went off towards Ṣafā from the door.³⁹⁸

Ibn ‘Abbās (rta) narrates that during this *tawāf*, his right shoulder was uncovered and he had covered his left shoulder after inserting the [*ihrām*] cloth

390. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 168, (no. 1814).

391. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 215, (no. 1184).

392. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 283, (no. 1755); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 557, (no. 3219).

393. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 284, (no. 1762); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 507, (no. 2918).

394. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 265-266, (no. 1641); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 525-526, (no. 3001).

395. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 267, (no. 1650); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 507, (no. 2918).

396. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 263, (no. 1626); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 537, (no. 3078).

397. Ibn ‘Abbās (rta) interpreted this practice of the Prophet (sws) by opining that when Muslims reached Madīnah, they were taunted for becoming physically weak. In return, the Prophet (sws) directed the people to offer the *tawāf* while running in this manner and he himself offered it in this manner too. See: Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 534-535, (no. 3059).

398. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 513-516, (no. 2950).

through his right armpit.³⁹⁹

Some narratives also mention that he did the *istilām* of the *rukni-yamānī* during the *tawāf*.⁴⁰⁰

Similarly, among the blessings of the *tawāf* as recorded in certain narratives is that he who did *tawāf* and then also offered two *rak‘at*, it was as if he emancipated a slave in the way of God.⁴⁰¹

(4) Sa‘ī

The manner in which the Prophet (sws) offered the *sa‘ī* was that once he was through with the *tawāf*, he went off towards Ṣafā and climbed right to its top; then he faced the Qiblah and declared the oneness and sovereignty of Allah and declared:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ ، لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ، لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ ، وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ
وَحْدَهُ ، أَنْجَزَ وَعْدَهُ ، نَصَرَ عَبْدَهُ ، وَهَزَمَ الْأَحْزَابَ وَحْدَهُ (مسلم ، رقم: ٢٩٥٠)

There is no God but Allah; He is alone; no one is His partner; sovereignty is His and all praise and gratitude also is His and He has power on everything. There is no God but Allah; He is alone; He has fulfilled His promise and has helped His servant and alone has defeated all groups who have rejected [the truth].⁴⁰²

He repeated these words three times and in between, he also invoked the Almighty each time. Then he set off for Marwah and when his feet touched the slope, he started to run and as soon as he reached the incline, he reverted to his own gait. At Marwah, he repeated what he did at Ṣafā, and in this manner completed seven rounds.⁴⁰³

(5) Waqūf at ‘Arafāt

The Prophet (sws) set off for ‘Arafāt from Minā after sunrise on the 9th of Dhū al-Hajj. There a camp had been erected for him in the valley of Namrah. He resided in this camp till the sun started to decline (*zuhra* time). Then he came to the lower part of the valley and delivered a sermon to the people. Following this, he offered the *zuhra* and the *‘asr* prayers with one *adhan* and two *takbirs*. He did not offer the optional prayer either before or after them. Then near the Jabal-i Rahmat he stood while facing the Qiblah invoking and beseeching the Almighty till sunset.⁴⁰⁴ Anas (rta) reports that on that day people kept reciting the *talbiyah* and also the *takbirs* but no objection was raised against these practices.⁴⁰⁵

399. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 183-184, (no. 1884).

400. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 260-261, (nos. 1606, 1609); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 535, (nos. 3062, 3063).

401. Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 444, (no. 2956).

402. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 513-516, (no. 2950).

403. Ibid.

404. Ibid., 513-516, (no. 2950).

405. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 269, (no. 1659); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 540,

Ā’ishah (rta) narrates from the Prophet (sws): “On the day of ‘Arafah, the Almighty is near His people; He expresses His pride about them and does not liberate His servants from Fire anymore than this day.”⁴⁰⁶

(6) Stay at Muzdalifah

At Muzdalifah also, the Prophet (sws) offered the *maghrib* and *ishā* prayers with one *adhān* and two *takbīrs*, the way he had offered the *zuhr* and the *‘asr* prayers at ‘Arafāt. Then he rested till dawn and did not offer any optional prayers. However, he offered the *fajr* prayer a little early. He then stood by the Mash‘ar al-Harām and kept invoking and beseeching the Almighty till the day fully dawned. Just before sunrise, he set off from there and reached Minā while briskly crossing the valley of Muḥassar.⁴⁰⁷

(7) Ramī

The Prophet (sws) did *ramī* at mid-morning on the day of sacrifice and on the other days when the sun started to decline.⁴⁰⁸ For this, he faced the Jamrah with the Sacred Mosque on His left and Minā on his right. Then he hurled seven pebbles and recited the *takbīr* each time he threw a pebble. He also did *waqūf* (the ceremonial stand) near the first two Jamrahs and after *ramī* expressing his gratitude to Him, declaring His exaltedness and oneness and invoking and beseeching Him for long. However, he did not stand near the Jamrah-i ‘Aqabah.⁴⁰⁹

At this occasion and on the eighth of Dhū al-Hajj also when he came to Makkah from Minā, he shortened all his prayers as long as he stayed here.⁴¹⁰

When certain shepherds of the area asked permission to spend the night with their herds instead of spending it at Minā, the Prophet (sws) allowed them to do so and said: “After hurling pebbles on the day of sacrifice, you can hurl the pebbles of the two days on one day.”⁴¹¹

(8) Animal Sacrifice

He offered animal sacrifice in the usual way. However, a question arose that if the animals of *hadī* came near death during the way, then what should be done? It is narrated by Ibn ‘Abbās (rta) that when a person who had been sent by the Prophet (sws) with sacrificial camels inquired from the Prophet (sws), he answered: “Slaughter them and dip their hooves in blood and place them near the humps⁴¹² and then neither you nor your associates should eat their meat.”⁴¹³

(no. 3097).

406. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 568-569, (no. 3288).

407. Ibid., 513-516, (no. 2950).

408. Ibid., 546, (nos. 3141, 3142).

409. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 282-283, (nos. 1751, 1752, 1753); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 513-516, 545, (nos. 2950, 3132).

410. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 268, (nos. 1655, 1656).

411. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 208-209, (nos. 1975, 1976).

412. This he said in order to clarify to the on comers that this animal has been sacrificed in the proper way and is thus *halal* and is not carrion.

9. ḥalq

On the occasion of the final *hajj*, the Prophet (sws) himself had his head shaved (*ḥalq*) and some of the Companions (rta) also preferred it.⁴¹⁴ Ibn ‘Umar (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) prayed three times for those who had shaved their heads and once for those who had haircuts.⁴¹⁵

This practice of the Prophet (sws) is an indication that the reward of shaving the head is more than just having a haircut.

There are certain other things that have been reported in certain narratives about *hajj* and ‘umrah:

1. A lady raised her child towards the Prophet (sws) and said: “Can he also offer the *hajj*?” The Prophet (sws) replied: “Yes, but the reward of this *hajj* shall go to you.”⁴¹⁶

2. A lady from the tribe of Kath‘am asked: “O Messenger of God! The *hajj* is obligatory upon my father but he is so old that he cannot even sit on an animal of conveyance; can I offer the *hajj* for him.” The Prophet (sws) replied: “Yes.”⁴¹⁷

3. A lady from the tribe of Juhaynah inquired from the Prophet (sws): “My mother had vowed to offer the *hajj*; now she has died; can I offer it for her.” He replied: “You should certainly offer it; would you not have paid back a loan she had borrowed? This is a loan taken from God; so pay it back and the obligation to pay back the loan to God is more [than any other].”⁴¹⁸

4. Once a person uttered these words before the Prophet (sws): لَيْكَ عَنْ شُبْرُمَةٍ. The Prophet (sws) inquired: “Who is this Shubrumah? He said: “He is my brother.” The Prophet (sws) asked: “Have you offered your own *hajj*?” He said: “No.” The Prophet (sws) then remarked: “First do your own *hajj* and then do it on behalf of Shubrumah.”⁴¹⁹

5. On the occasion of the final *hajj* while the Prophet (sws) was at Minā, he stood to answer questions raised by the people, someone asked: “I did not know [the right sequence] so I have shaved my head before offering the sacrifice?” The

413. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 557, (no. 3216). It is evident from this directive of the Prophet (sws) that he liked that all the meat of such animals be reserved for the poor and considered as sacrificial meat.

414. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 279, (no. 1729); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 547, (no. 3144).

415. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 279, (no. 1728); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 547, (no. 3148).

416. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 564, (no. 3253). It is this principle which the Prophet (sws) explained regarding doing some virtuous deed on behalf of someone viz. the reward is for the person who does that particular deed. All narratives which discuss this subject should be understood in the light of this principle.

417. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 299, (no. 1855); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 563, (no. 3251).

418. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 299, (no. 1852).

419. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 167, (no. 1811); Abū al-Qāsim Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Mu‘jam al-ṣaghīr*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār ‘ammār, 1405 AH), 377, (no. 630).

Prophet (sws) replied: "Not to worry; offer the sacrifice now." Another person asked: "I did not know [the right sequence] and I have offered the sacrifice before doing the *ramī*." The Prophet (sws) remarked: "Do the *ramī* now; not to worry." In general whenever he was asked about what should be done if a rite had been offered before or after its appointed time, he said these same words: "Not to worry; do it now."⁴²⁰

6. The Prophet (sws) always warned people about the sanctity of Madīnah that just as Abraham (sws) had classified Makkah as sacred, he had also classified Madīnah as sacred. Therefore, no one should shed the blood of any person within the two limits of the city nor should he hunt animals nor pick up weapons for war nor shake off the leaves of a tree except if the intention is to feed animals.⁴²¹

The Prophet (sws) is similarly reported to have said: "Any person who was guilty of any religious innovation in the city of Madīnah or offered residence to those who are guilty of this, then the curse of God, his angels and all mankind be on him."⁴²²

7. Regarding the space between his house and the sermon pulpit, he said that this is an orchard from among the orchards of Paradise and also said: "My pulpit is right at the place where my fountain will be on the Day of Judgement."⁴²³

5. Animal Sacrifice

وَكُلُّ أُمَّةٍ حَعَنَا مَنْسَكًا لِيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ فَإِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ بِشَرٍّ وَبَشِّرَ الْمُخْبِتِينَ (٣٤:٢٢)

And for every community, We have ordained the ritual of sacrifice so that they may pronounce the name of God over the cattle which He has blessed them with because your God is one God; so surrender yourselves to Him. [But this will only be done by those whose hearts have bowed down before their God] and [O Prophet (sws)!] Give glad tidings [from the Almighty] to these who bow down. (22:34)

In all the ancient religions of the world, the ritual of animal sacrifice has remained a great means of attaining the nearness of the Almighty. Its essence is the same as that of the *zakāh*, but it is not to be regarded as analogous to wealth; it is essentially a vow of pledging one's life and is fulfilled by the animal we sacrifice

420. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 280, (no. 1736, 1737); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 549, (no. 3157).

421. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 301, (no. 1867); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 573, 577, (nos. 3317, 3336).

422. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 301, (no. 1870); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 575, (no. 3327).

423. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 190, (no. 1196); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 582, (no. 3370).

on behalf of our life. Seemingly, this is like presenting ourselves to death, but a little deliberation shows that this death is the door to real life. The Qur'ān at one place says: (١٥٤ :٢) (and do not say that those slain in this cause of God are dead; [they are not dead; in fact] they are alive, but you are not aware of [the manner they live]. (2:154))

At one instance, the Qur'ān by placing the prayer in comparison to life and the sacrifice in comparison to death has referred to this very aspect: just as the prayer is like life in the way of God, the sacrifice is like death in His way:

فُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَسُكْرِي وَمَحْيَايِ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٦٦٢:٦)

Say: "My prayer and my sacrifice, my life and my death, are all for God, Lord of the Universe." (6:162)

When Abraham (sws) was directed to sacrifice a ram in place of his son and to commemorate this great sacrifice making it a living tradition for the coming generations, the Almighty said: (٣٧ :١٠٧) (وَغَيْرِهِ يَدْبَعُ عَظِيمٌ (and We ransomed Ishmael for a great sacrifice, (37:107)). The implication of these words was that the vow made by Abraham (sws) had been accepted by the Almighty and now generation after generation, people would commemorate this great incident by sacrificing animals.

Viewed thus, the sacrifice is the pinnacle of worship. When we make an animal stand or bow down⁴²⁴ in the direction of the Baytullāh and also direct our own face towards the House of God and present the sacrificed animal as an offering to God by saying:⁴²⁵ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ , we are actually offering our own selves to God.

This vow is the essence of Islam because the meaning of Islam is that one should surrender to God and submit his most prized possession – so much so, his own life – to Him.

A little deliberation shows that the sacrifice is a portrayal of this essence. When Abraham (sws) and his great son Ishmael (sws) presented themselves to God, the Qur'ān called this submission as "Islam": (٣٧ :١٠٣) فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَكَلَّهُ لِلْجَيْنِ (then when both of them submitted and the father made his son lie on his temple; (37:103)). It is worth noting that in the above quoted verses of Sūrah Hajj, the words فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمُوا وَبَشَّرَ الْمُخْتَبِطِينَ very aptly point to this essence. The implication is that if our hearts are bowed down before our God, then we should submit ourselves to Him because our God is one God. This is the very essence of sacrifice and the Almighty has made it part of the *shari'ah* so that people can especially express their gratitude to Him; therefore, no one should associate partners with Him in it.

424. In case of *nahr*, the animal is made to stand and in case of *dhibh*, we laid it in the direction of the Baytullāh.

425. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 989, (no. 5565); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 877, (no. 5090).

i. History of Animal Sacrifice

The history of sacrifice begins with Adam (sws). According to the Qur'ān, when two of his sons, Abel and Cain, presented their offerings to the Almighty, one of them was accepted and the other was not: إِذْ قَرَبَا قُرْبَيْنَا فَتَقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقْبَلْ مِنَ الْآخَرِ (٢٧:٥). It is explicitly mentioned in the Bible that Abel on this occasion had offered the sacrifice of the first born of his goats:

Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, ‘With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man’. Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favour on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favour. (Genesis, 4:1-5)

This practice quite evidently must have continued later also. Consequently, there exist signs and remnants in all ancient religions which corroborate this fact. However, the way this worship ritual has increased in its importance, grandeur and scope after the sacrifice of Abraham (sws) is unprecedented. The details of the sacrifice offered by him are as follows:

When he migrated from his people thinking that there was no hope for them to accept faith, he prayed to God to bless him with virtuous children. This prayer was accepted and the Almighty gave him glad tidings of the birth of a son. Ishmael (sws) was this son. According to the Qur'ān, when he grew up and started to run and walk about his father, Abraham (sws) saw a dream in which he was being directed to sacrifice his son to the Almighty. Although this directive was given in a dream and dreams need to be interpreted – and the interpretation of such a dream was that he should devote his son to the Almighty for the service of the House of God and it did not certainly mean that he was required to slaughter his son – this mighty and virtuous servant of God decided to follow the dream without interpreting what it implied. The first step he took in the implementation of this directive was that he informed his son of this dream in order to test his mettle and resolve. The son deeming it to be the directive of the Almighty immediately told his father to comply with it without any hesitation and attested that he was fully ready and prepared for the step. Being satisfied with the answer of the son, Abraham (sws) took him to the hill of Marwah and made him lie down on his temples so that he could be sacrificed. He was about to slit his throat with a knife when a voice spoke to him: “O Abraham! You have made your dream come true; this was a great trial and you have succeeded in it; no need to proceed now.” Consequently, the Almighty ransomed Ishmael (sws) for the sacrifice of a ram, and to commemorate this incident the ritual of sacrifice was instituted as a great tradition to be carried out on the same day each year. It is this sacrifice that we offer with fervour and enthusiasm on the occasions of the

hajj and '*umrah* and on the '*īd* of *al-adhā*. The Qur'ān says:

قَالُوا ابْنُوا لَهُ مِيَّانًا فَأَلْقُوهُ فِي الْحَجَّمِ فَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَسْفَلَيْنَ وَقَالَ إِلَيْيَ ذَاهِبٌ إِلَى رَبِّي
سَيَهْدِينَ رَبٌّ هَبٌ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ فَبَشَّرْتَنَا بِعُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَا بْنَيَ إِلَيْيَ أَرَى
فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى قَالَ يَا أَبَتْ أَفْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمِنُ سَتَسْجُدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ
فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَهُ وَتَلَهُ لِلْجِبِينِ وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ قَدْ صَدَقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ إِنْ هَذَا
لَهُوَ الْبَلَاءُ الْمُبِينُ وَفَدَيْنَاهُ بِذِيْحٍ عَظِيمٍ (٣٧: ٩٧-١٠٧)

They said: "Build up a pyre and cast him into the blazing fire." Thus they tried to scheme against him; but We defeated them. And [when Abraham saw this,] he said: "I will take refuge with my Lord; He will give me guidance. Lord, grant me a righteous son." So [when he prayed to Us,] We gave him news of a forbearing son. And when he reached the age when he could work with him, [one day] his father said to him: "My son! I dream that I am slaughtering you. Tell me what you think." He replied: "Father! Do as you are bidden. God willing, you shall find me steadfast." And when both submitted to God, and Abraham laid down his son prostrate upon his temples and We called out to him, saying: "Abraham! You have fulfilled your dream." Thus do We reward the righteous. This was indeed an open trial. [Abraham succeeded in it] and [as a result], We ransomed his son with a grand sacrifice. (37:97-107)

ii. Objective of Animal Sacrifice

The objective of sacrifice is to express gratitude to the Almighty. When we offer our life symbolically to the Almighty by offering the sacrifice of an animal, we are in fact expressing our gratitude on the guidance of submission which was expressed by Abraham (sws) by sacrificing his only son. On this occasion, the words uttered to declare the exaltedness and oneness of the Almighty are done so for this very objective. The Qur'ān has explained this directive in the following words:

لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهُ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ كَذَلِكَ سَخَرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ
مَا هَذَا كُمْ وَتَسْرِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٢٢: ٣٧)

The flesh and blood [of] these [sacrificed animals] does not reach God; it is only your piety that reaches Him. Thus has He subjected them to your service so that you may give glory to God for guiding you. [This is the way of the righteous] and [O Prophet!] Give glad tidings to these righteous. (22:37)

iii. Shari'ah of Animal Sacrifice

The *shari'ah* regarding animal sacrifice that has reached us through the consensus and perpetual practice of the *ummah* can be stated thus:

1. All four legged animals which are cattle can be sacrificed.
2. Sacrificial animals should not be flawed and should be of appropriate age.

3. The time of animal sacrifice begins after offering the ‘īd prayer on the 10th of Dhū al-Hajj (*yawm al-nahr*)

4. The days fixed for animal sacrifice are the same as have been appointed for the stay at Minā once the pilgrims return from Muzdalifah. In Sūrah Hajj, the words أَيَّامٌ مَعْلُومَاتٍ (some appointed days (22:28)), allude to these very days. In religious parlance, they are called “the days of *tashrīq*”. Besides animal sacrifice in these days, one is also required to declare the *takbīr* at the end of each congregational prayer. Being an absolute directive, the words of the *takbīr* have not been fixed.

5. The meat of sacrificial animals can also be eaten without any hesitation by those who have had them slaughtered and can also be used to feed others. The words used by the Qur’ān: فَكُلُّوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعُمُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعَذَّرَ (so eat from it your selves and also feed those who are content and those who ask, (22:36)) explicitly point to this conclusion.

This is the *sharī‘ah* of animal sacrifice. The Prophet (sws) has also explained some of its aspects:

i. In the month of animal sacrifice, those who intend to sacrifice an animal, in accordance with the ancient tradition of offering sacrifice, will not cut their nails or hair before they have offered sacrifice.⁴²⁶

ii. Animals should be sacrificed in all circumstances after the ‘īd prayer. It will not be regarded as the sacrifice of ‘īd if it is offered before the ‘īd prayer; it will be a mere animal sacrifice that one may offer to eat meet.⁴²⁷

iii. The appropriate age for a sacrificial sheep or goat is at least one year, for that of a cow or a bull, it is at least two years and for camels, male or female, it is at least five years. If these animals are not available, a ram can be sacrificed. It will suffice even if it is six months old.⁴²⁸

iv. More than one people can share the sacrifice of camels and cows, both male or female. These share holders can even go up to seven.⁴²⁹ There are some narratives which mention that at one instance in the presence of the Prophet (sws), ten people shared one camel for sacrifice and he did not stop them.⁴³⁰

v. Animal sacrifice can also be offered as an optional act of worship other than on ‘īd. Consequently, at the birth of children, the Prophet (sws) himself offered animal sacrifice and urged others also to do it.⁴³¹

426. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 882, (no. 5121).

427. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 988-989, (nos. 5560, 5561, 5562); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 874-876, (nos. 5064, 5069, 5079).

428. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 876, (no. 5082); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 96, (no. 2799); Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 608-609, (no. 4383).

429. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 553, (no. 3186).

430. Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr*, vol. 3, 166-167, (no. 1501); Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 610, (nos. 4397, 4398).

431. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 974, (no. 5472); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 106, (no. 2841).

The Social Sharī‘ah

Man by nature likes to live in a community. The reason that the Almighty has bestowed him with this nature is that He does not create human beings in the prime of their youth. Similarly, human beings do not generally die in their youth without passing through old age. On the contrary, a human being is created as a feeble child in the womb of the mother who enters this world to be welcomed by her loving affection. He then grows being nurtured and nourished by others. At first, he drags himself and then crawls along his knees before he is able to stand on his feet. Even after this state, he needs the help of others at every step. Finally, after going through various phases of childhood and adolescence, he enters the prime of his youth at the age of fifteen or sixteen. This blooming period of his life also does not last more than twenty to thirty years. Then comes old age and in spite of many a time attaining great heights in intellect in his prime, he once again has to turn to others to fulfil his needs like a frail child for the rest of his life.

This life cycle of man necessarily entails that he live in a social set-up. From the very beginning of his life, this affinity towards a social set-up is fully found in his being. He does not need to find this tendency in his external world. When he enters this world, he brings with him all his internal urges and inner motivations and uses them to fulfil his needs wherever and whenever required.

The history of mankind shows that owing to this very aspect of human nature, Adam, the founder of the human dynasty was not sent alone in this world; he was blessed with a wife from his own species – someone who was meant to be his companion. From these two sprang many men and women as their progeny. Gradually, a family, a tribe and finally a state came into existence. The resultant social set-up afforded man the opportunity to realize his hidden potentials and urges. While pointing out this fact, the Qur’ān says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبِّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسْأَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا (٤:١)

Mankind! Fear your Lord, Who created you from a single person, created, of like species his mate, and from these two scattered countless men and women [in this world], and fear Allah through whom you seek mutual help and fear breaking blood relationships. Indeed God is watching over you. (4:1)

A little deliberation shows that this verse embodies all the principles upon which the Almighty has based human society. Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī, while pointing out these principles writes:

Firstly, this world is not unattended; on the contrary, it has been created by the Almighty who is the Lord of everyone. It is therefore unseemly for a person to create disorder in it and defy His authority. Everyone should remain fearful of the Almighty's grasp – the Almighty who is the Creator and Master of everyone.

Secondly, the Almighty has created man from a single soul: Adam. Consequently, mankind is the progeny of one father. No one is superior to the other. Whatever their colour, cast or creed, all human beings are equal. Indeed, superiority rests on virtues a person acquires through self-effort. All other standards of superiority are baseless.

Thirdly, just as mankind is the progeny of one father, their mother is also one: Eve. Hence, no one is superior to the other. One father and mother have created this global family. It is evident from the verse that Eve is of the same species as Adam. This further means that women are not inferior beings. As human beings, men and women are equal in status.

Fourthly, the bases of mutual help and co-operation in a society are three driving forces: oneness of God, unity of ancestors and commonality of blood relationships. It is essential that every person realize the obligation these blood relationships entail and fulfil it. It is also his responsibility to safeguard these relationships and be on guard that no slogan should be able to destroy these blood relationships and replace it with some sentiment of the age of ignorance. If such a thing emerges in a society, it should ring an alarm for the whole society and it is the duty of every sensitive member of the society to do his utmost to impede its progress. The words: وَأَنْتُمُ اللَّهُ أَذْنِي تَسْأَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ (and fear Allah through whom you seek mutual help and fear breaking blood relationships) at the end of the verse sound this warning. Hence, according to Islam, it is these pillars on which stands the whole edifice of family, society and state. As long as these pillars are intact, this edifice is intact. If these become weak, the edifice would be endangered and if they are razed down, the edifice too would be demolished.¹

In order to firmly establish a society on these fundamentals, an everlasting bond between the spouses is made essential in the religion of the prophets. The Almighty has informed us that to fulfil this scheme both a man and a woman are innately equipped with all the necessary urges so that they are able to become

1. Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī, *Tazkiyah-i nafs*, 142-143.

true companions of one another and live as two souls united in one body:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوْدَةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنْ فِي
ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (٢١:٣٠)

And among His Signs is that He created for you mates from among your species that you may obtain comfort from them, and [for this purpose], He has put love and sympathy within you; surely, in this are signs for those who reflect. (30:21)

If the whole life of a human being – from childhood to old age – is kept in consideration, sense and reason endorse that to fulfil his physical, psychological and social needs an everlasting marriage bond between the spouses is essential. Consequently, the Almighty has given a detailed social law to man through His prophets regarding the society which is established on this basis.

In the following paragraphs, an attempt shall be made to explain this law enshrined in the Qur'ān and Sunnah as the eternal *sharī'ah* of God.

1. Nikāh (Marriage)

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيَامَى مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ إِنْ يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءً يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَاللَّهُ
وَاسِعٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَيُسْتَعْفِفُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ نِكَاحًا حَتَّى يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ (٢٤: ٣٢-٣٣)

And marry those among you who are single, and those who have the capability for marriage among your slaves, male or female. If they are poor, Allah will give them means out of His grace: for Allah is ample-giving, and He knows all things. And let those who find not an opportunity for marriage keep themselves chaste, until Allah gives them means out of His grace. (24:32-33)

It is asserted with great stress and clarity that in the eyes of the Almighty there is only one legitimate way to satisfy one's sexual desire from women: marriage (*nikāh*). If marriage is somehow not possible, then this cannot become a license for gratifying one's sexual desire without entering into the marital bond. Consequently, the society is urged to wed people who as yet have not been able to marry. Marriage is an open declaration of a contract by a man and woman to live permanently as husband and wife. It is declared in the presence of people through a responsible personality with great solemnity and gravity after he delivers a sermon to counsel and guide them. It is evident from divine scriptures that this way was adopted from the very birth of man on this earth. Consequently, the Qur'ān was not required to give a new directive in this regard. As an age old *sunnah* of the prophets, Muhammad (sws) passed it on to his *ummah* thus keeping it intact. In the above quoted verses, besides urging people to follow this practice, they are given glad tidings that even if they are poor they should marry

in order to protect themselves from immoral acts: hopefully, the Almighty will bless them with resources if they resolve to follow this practice.

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, while commenting on this verse writes:

... as long as a person does not have a wife, his life is more like a nomad and many of his abilities remain shrunk and dormant. Similarly, as long as a woman is unmarried, she resembles a creeper which is not able to grow and flourish owing to want of support. But once a woman has a husband and a man has a wife, their abilities develop and increase, and when both of them start to strive in life together, the Almighty blesses them in their struggle and their circumstances also change [for the better].²

2. Relations Prohibited for Marriage

وَلَا تَنكِحُوا مَا نَكَحَ آباؤُكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَمَقْتَنًا وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَّهَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَائِكُمْ وَأَخْوَاتُكُمْ وَعَمَّاتُكُمْ وَحَالَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُ الْأَخِ وَبَنَاتُ الْأُخْتِ وَأُمَّهَاتُكُمْ الَّاتِي أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَأَخْوَاتُكُمْ مِنْ الرَّضَاعَةِ وَأُمَّهَاتُ نَسَائِكُمْ وَرَبَّاتُكُمُ الَّاتِي فِي حُجُورِكُمْ مِنْ نَسَائِكُمُ الَّاتِي دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَإِنَّ لَمْ تَكُونُوا دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَحَلَالٌ أَبْنَائِكُمْ وَحَلَالٌ أَبْنَائِكُمُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ أَصْلَابِكُمْ وَأَنْ تَجْمِعُوا بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا وَالْمُحْسَنَاتُ مِنِ النِّسَاءِ إِلَى مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ كِتَابُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ (٤: ٢٢-٢٤)

And marry not women whom your fathers married – except what has been done in the past: it was shameful and odious – an abominable practice indeed. Prohibited to you [for marriage] are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your maternal and paternal aunts, the daughters of your brothers and sisters; your mothers who have suckled you and your sisters through fosterage. [Similarly], the mothers of your wives, your step-daughters raised under you born of your wives with whom you have lain – no offence if you have not lain with their mothers, and the wives of your real sons, and two sisters in wedlock at the same time, except for what has already happened. God indeed is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Also [prohibited are] women already married, except those whom your right hands possess; this is a written obligation upon you from God. (4:22-24)

The above quoted verse enlists women with whom marriage has been prohibited. The list begins with the step mother and ends with women who are married to someone. In between these two, the prohibited women mentioned are based on the three bases of relationship: Lineage, Fosterage and Marriage.

In certain sections of the Arab *jāhiliyyah*, there was a tradition according to

which a son inherited the wife of his father and he would feel nothing wrong with inheriting her. The Qur'ān refers to it as open lewdness and a shameful and an abominable practice. Consequently, it prohibited this practice and declared that whatever happened in the past shall be overlooked but in future no Muslim should perpetrate such an indecent act.

Similar is the case of the woman who is married to someone. No person has the right to marry her unless she is legally divorced from her husband. It is obvious that such a practice totally negates the very reason for which the institution of family has been set up. Consequently, it has been prohibited by the Almighty. However, women of those times who were made captives in battles were exempted from this rule. For them, the rule was that if they wanted to marry then in spite of being already married could marry. This was because as soon as they married anew their previous marriage, stood annulled automatically as per the traditions of those times. The words إِلَّا مَا مَلَكْتُ أَيْمَانُكُم show that the Qur'ān has also approved this exception so that if such women wanted to become part of the Muslim society, they could easily do so.

The matter of the remaining prohibitions shall now be taken up.

i. Relationships by Lineage

The verse first of all mentions the seven relations prohibited because of lineage viz. mothers, daughters, sisters, paternal aunts, maternal aunts and the daughters of the brothers and daughters of the sisters (nieces). These seven relations possess such sanctity that people of noble nature cannot even think of any sexual inclination towards them. There is no doubt that it is this sanctity which is the foundation of civilization, the spirit of culture and the fountainhead of pure and unadulterated sentiments of affection and gentleness that bring a family into being. The Almighty wants the gaze of a son for his mother, of a father for his daughter, of a brother for his sister, of a nephew for both his maternal and paternal aunts, of a maternal and a paternal uncle for their nieces to remain free from the slightest trace of sexual leaning. Sense and reason also bear witness that any sort of sexual proclivity between these relations is devastating for human dignity and honour and is totally against the unadulterated state of chastity and purity that distinguishes man from animals.

The directive stated in the given verses regarding these relations is very explicit. However, three aspects about this directive should remain clear:

Firstly, the words used for these relations in Arabic entail that no distinction be made between real and step relations. Consequently, both a real mother and a step mother, a real sister and a half sister, for example, would equally be the addressees of this directive. Similar is the case for the real or half sister of a father and a mother. Likewise is the case of the daughters of brothers and sisters. Whether they are real or half, their daughters will be regarded as addressees of this directive.

Secondly, the word "mother" also connotes the "father's mother" and the "mother's mother" all the way up. Likewise the word "daughter" also includes the "son's

daughter” and the “daughter’s daughter” all the way down. No discrimination can be made between them regarding this directive.

Thirdly, the sister of the maternal grandfather and the sister of the paternal grandmother are like paternal and maternal aunts respectively. Hence, they shall also be included on equal basis in the application of the directive.

ii. Relationships by Fosterage

Foster relationships have a similar sanctity as the real ones. While commenting on this aspect, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

In our society, people do not consider foster relationships as strong as what the Arabs considered them to be. This is because of the difference in customs between their society and ours. The truth of the matter is that this relationship has deep resemblance with the maternal relationship. A mother who suckles and brings up a child is his half-mother if not a full one. Moreover, how is it possible that a child not be influenced by someone whose milk has nourished and sustained him. An absence of such influence would mean that his nature has been perverted and it was necessary for a religion like Islam which conforms to human nature to reform such perversion.³

While explaining how exactly a foster relationship is formed, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

... such a relationship is not formed by some chance episode of suckling a child. The words of the Qur’ān stated in this verse clearly testify that this relationship is established only with the full intent of those involved. In other words, an accidental happening does not establish this relationship; it only comes into being after it is planned and is well thought of. Consequently, in the first place, the words used by the Qur’ān are (your mothers who have suckled you). Secondly, the word رَضَاعَة (radā‘ah) is used viz: وَأَخْوَاتُكُمْ مِنْ الرَّضَاعَة. People conversant with the subtleties of the Arabic language know that إِرْضَاع (irdā‘) is from the *if‘āl* category which in general has an element of emphasis in it. Moreover, the word رَضَاعَة (radā‘ah) is absolutely inappropriate to be used when a lady suckles a crying child to soothe him.⁴

The Prophet (sws) has also explained the above purport of the Qur’ān in the following words:

‘Ā’ishah (rta) narrates from the Prophet (sws): If one or two drops are drunk by chance, then this does not prohibit a relationship.⁵

‘Ā’ishah (rta) narrates: Once when the Prophet (sws) came over to my house, a

3. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 2, 275.

4. Ibid.

5. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 616, (no. 3590).

person was sitting there. He disliked this situation and I could see a feeling of disgust on his face. I said: "O Messenger of God! This is my foster brother." The Prophet (sws) replied: "Be careful regarding all such brothers because a foster relationship is only established at the time when a child is suckled in the age when he needs milk."⁶

Here no one should misconceive the case of Sālim, the adopted son of Abū Hudhayfah (rta), who was suckled in mature age. What at most can be said about this case was that the Prophet (sws) had suggested a way to deal with the situation that had arisen after the newly revealed directive of the Qur'ān regarding adopted children. It cannot be made the basis of a permanent directive. The case of Sālim is thus:

فَجَاءَتْ سَهْلَةُ بِنْتُ سَهْلٍ بْنَ عَمْرِو الْقَرْشِيُّ ثُمَّ الْعَامِرِيُّ وَهِيَ امْرَأَةٌ أَيْ حُذْفَيَّةٌ قَالَتْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنَّا كُنَّا نَرَى سَالِمًا وَلَدًا وَكَانَ يَأْوِي مَعِي وَمَعَ أَيْ حُذْفَيَّةَ فِي بَيْتِ وَاحِدٍ وَيَرَانِي فُضْلًا وَقَدْ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فِيهِمْ مَا قَدْ عَلِمْتُ فَكَيْفَ تَرَى فِيهِ قَالَ لَهَا النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَرْضِيَّهُ

So Sahlah who was the wife of Abū Hudhayfah (rta) and the daughter of Suhayl ibn 'Amr al-Qarshī al-'Āmirī once came to the Prophet (sws) and said: "O Messenger of God! We always considered Sālim as our son. He used to live with me and with Abū Hudhayfah in the same house and would see me in my house clothes. You are well aware of the directive which the Almighty has revealed about such boys. Now, what is your opinion regarding this matter?" The Prophet (sws) replied: "Feed him with your milk."⁷

Hence, it is absolutely certain that for fosterage it is essential that the child be in the suckling age and that the matter be a planned one and not an accidental one. Moreover, foster relations are prohibited for marriage just as the ones through lineage are. This is the very purport of the Qur'ān. However, the style in which this directive is stated – peculiar to the sublime language of the Qur'ān – is such that what is self-evident because of intrinsic evidence or because of some logical outcome is not stated in words.⁸ The words used are: وَأَمْهَنُكُمُ اللَّاتِي أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَأَخْوَانُكُمْ مِنْ الرَّضَاعَةِ (your mothers who have suckled you and your sisters through fosterage). As stated, together with foster mothers, foster sisters are also regarded as relations prohibited for marriage. Had the directive ended with foster mothers, nothing further could have been understood from it; however, if the relationship of fosterage with a mother makes her daughter a foster sister, then it is but logical to regard other relations of the foster mother to be also included in this directive. If being suckled through the same mother can make a girl a foster sister, why can't

6. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 912, (no. 5102); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 619, (no. 3606).

7. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 229, (no. 2061).

8. In order to appreciate this style, see the first preamble: "Fundamental Principles".

the sister of the foster mother be regarded as the maternal aunt, her husband as the father, the sister of her husband as the paternal aunt, her daughter’s daughter and her son’s daughter as nieces. Hence, it is obvious that all these relations are also prohibited in marriage. This indeed is the purport of the Book of God and the words وَأَخْوَانُكُمْ مِنْ الرَّضَاعَةٍ testify to it. It is evident to any person of knowledge who deliberates on these words.

The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

يَحْرُمُ مِنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ مَا يَحْرُمُ مِنَ الْوِلَادَةِ

Every relationship which is prohibited [for marriage] owing to lineage is also prohibited owing to fosterage.⁹

iii. Relationships by Marriage

After a mention of relationships prohibited for marriage on the basis of lineage and fosterage, relationships which are prohibited for marriage on the basis of marriage itself are mentioned in the verse quoted earlier. Such is the obviousness of the sanctity of these relationships in human nature that no reasoning is required. Consequently, the daughter-in-law is prohibited for the father, and the mother-in-law, the wife’s daughter,¹⁰ the wife’s sister and both nieces¹¹ of the wife, the maternal and paternal aunts of the wife are all prohibited for the husband. However, since these relationships are formed through the husband and the wife, a degree of weakness is found in them. Owing to this reason, the Qur’ān has imposed the following three conditions on the prohibition of these relationships:

Firstly, only the daughter of that wife is prohibited with whom one has had conjugal contact.

Secondly, only the daughter-in-law of a real son is prohibited.

Thirdly, the sister of a wife, her maternal and paternal aunts and her two nieces are only prohibited if the wife is in wedlock with the husband.

The first of the above mentioned conditions is referred to in the Qur’ān in these words: وَرَبَائِكُمُ اللَّاتِي فِي حُجُورِكُمْ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمُ اللَّاتِي دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُونُوا دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ (your step-daughters raised under you born of your wives with whom you have lain – no offence if you have not lain with their mothers). Here, together with the condition of conjugal contact, it is also said that step daughters who are raised under the guardianship of the husbands. It is evident that this last qualification is not a condition. While explaining this aspect, Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī writes:

... in the Arabic language, not every attribute is meant to impose a condition such that if the attribute does not exist, the directive would stand null and void. Intrinsic evidence and the context of the verse shows which attributes signify a condition and which merely portray a situation. In this particular

9. Mālik ibn Anas, *Al-Mu’attā*, 395-396, (no. 1887).

10. This implies the daughter from her previous marriage. (Translator)

11. This refers to both her sister’s daughter and her brother’s daughter. (Translator)

instance, it is not only the context and intrinsic evidence but explicit words which testify that the daughter of a wife from the previous husband is only prohibited if the husband has had conjugal contact with the wife. It is thus evident that the real reason of prohibition for such a daughter is conjugal contact with her mother. If this is the case, then the husband cannot marry such a daughter whether she has been raised under his guardianship or not. It must be kept in consideration that in lofty classical Arabic especially that of the Qur'ān a negation after a positive assertion or vice versa are never without purpose: they are indeed very meaningful. Mostly, such a style is meant to remove ambiguity from a statement. Hence, the view of some people that marriage with only that daughter¹² of a wife [with whom conjugal contact is made] is forbidden who is raised by the husband is incorrect. In their opinion, if this is not the case, then marriage is allowed.¹³

The second condition stated in the verse is mentioned by the words وَحَلَائِلُ أَبْنَائَكُمْ (and the wives of your real sons). The reason for this condition of "real sons" is that in the time of the Prophet (sws) people would consider marriage with the wives of the adopted sons as prohibited. By imposing this condition, the Qur'ān has elucidated the fact that mere adoption does not give the child the status of a begotten child nor does this adoption entail any prohibition regarding marriage. In Sūrah Ahzāb, the words of the Qur'ān are:

وَمَا جَعَلَ أَدْعِيَاءَ كُمْ أَبْنَاءَ كُمْ ذَلِكُمْ قَوْلُكُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَقُولُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِي السَّبِيلَ ادْعُوْهُمْ لِأَبَائِهِمْ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا آبَاءَهُمْ فَإِخْوَانَكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَمَوَالِيْكُمْ (٣٣:٤٥)

And He has not made your adopted sons your [real] sons. Such is your speech by your mouths and Allah says the truth, and only He shows the right way. Call them after [the names of] their fathers: that is more just in the sight of Allah. But if you know not their fathers, then they are your brothers in faith and your friends. (33:4-5)

The third condition is stated in the words: وَأَنْ تَجْمِعُوا بَيْنَ الْأَخْتَيْنِ (and two sisters in wedlock at the same time). A little deliberation shows that this expression is of the same style as the one which has been discussed before under foster relationships. Although the Qur'ān has only stated the prohibition of two sisters in simultaneous wedlock, it is evident that if combining two sisters in wedlock is a lewd thing as far as the relationship of marriage is concerned, then combining a lady with her brother's daughter in wedlock or with her sister's daughter in wedlock is like combining a mother and a daughter in wedlock. Hence, though the words used are: وَأَنْ تَجْمِعُوا بَيْنَ الْأَخْتَيْنِ, the purport of the Qur'ān undoubtedly is: وَأَنْ تَجْمِعُوا بَيْنَ الْأَخْتَيْنِ وَبَيْنَ الْمُرْأَةِ وَعَمْتَهَا وَبَيْنَ الْمُرْأَةِ خَالِتَهَا: (and two sisters in wedlock

12. This implies the daughter from her previous marriage. (Translator)

13. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 2, 276.

at the same time and a lady with her brother's daughter at the same time and a lady with her sister's daughter at the same time). However, all these words are suppressed after بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ because what is mentioned points towards this suppression as obviously understood. So obvious are the words of this suppression that no student of the Qur'ān can err in understanding them.

The Prophet (sws), consequently, is reported to have said:

لَا يُجْمِعُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْأَةِ وَعَمِّهَا وَلَا بَيْنَ الْمَرْأَةِ وَخَالَهَا

Neither can a lady and her paternal aunt nor can a lady and her maternal aunt be combined in wedlock.¹⁴

3. Bounds and Conditions of Nikāh (Marriage)

وَاحِلُّ لَكُمْ مَا وَرَاءَ ذَلِكُمْ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ مُحْسِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسَافِحِينَ فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْهُنَّ فَأُتْهُنَّ أُجُورُهُنَّ فَرِيضَةٌ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَيْنِكُمْ فِيمَا تَرَاضَيْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْفَرِيضَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَكِيمًا (٤:٢٤)

And all other women except for those [specified] are lawful to you such that you seek them through your wealth, desiring chastity, not lust. [Consequently, if you have not paid their dowers as yet], pay them their dowers as [your] obligation for the benefit you have derived from them. If after a dower is prescribed, you agree mutually on something there is no blame on you and Allah is All-Knowing All-Wise. (4:24)

The bounds and conditions of *nikāh* which this verse outlines are:

First, a *nikāh* should be conducted through wealth – which here refers to the dower. The Qur'ān emphasizes that the Almighty has ordained this payment as an essential pre-requisite of marriage. Consequently, it has directed Muslims to immediately complete this obligation if they have not yet done so. However, once a dower has been ascertained with the realization that it is an obligation of a Muslim husband, he and his wife can mutually change its amount as well as the time of its payment. Everyone must nevertheless know that the Originator of this law is All-Knowing and All-Wise. All His directives are based on flawless knowledge and deep wisdom. Hence neither should anyone attempt to disobey it nor dare change it in any way.

What is the significance of this dower? When a man and a woman pledge to marry, it is the man who takes the financial responsibility of the woman he is bringing home; the dower is nothing but a symbolic expression of this responsibility. The Qur'ān uses the words صَدْقَة (saduqah) and اِجْر (ajar) for it. Both words imply money which is given to a wife for her needs in return for her

14. Mālik ibn Anas, *Al-Mu'attā'*, 341, (no. 1600).

companionship. Like *nikāh* and the *nikāh* sermon, dower payment is an ancient practice that was in vogue in Arabia before the advent of the Prophet Muhammad (sws). It is mentioned in the Bible in similar terms.¹⁵

While commenting upon the importance of this age-old custom Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī writes:

... matters in which payment of money is a pre-condition and the payment itself is not a favour but a duty such that it is understood even though it may not be mentioned and its payment is an obligation dependent on the social status of the lady – then such matters are serious ones both as regards the *shari'ah* and the norms of society. No sensible person will become party to such a contract unless after deep consideration, he prepares himself to fulfil its responsibilities – [it is] for these benefits that the payment of the dower has been made essential. Those who have overlooked these benefits deem that the payment of the dower money has relegated the status of a woman to a saleable commodity. This of course is the result of not properly perceiving the underlying reason for the payment of the dower. The reason for this payment is to sound a warning to every person seeking to enter the sacred bond of marriage that he must think over the extent of responsibility this step will entail. Marital matters must be taken seriously. Even words said in a light-hearted manner in such matters have a solemn status. It is like walking on a sharp-edged sword.¹⁶

The *shari'ah* has not fixed any amount for the dower. It has been left to the norms and traditions of a society and to the discretion of the people. Consequently, it can be fixed to any amount which is in accordance with the social status of the woman and the financial status of the man who is to become her husband.

The second requisite of marriage stated in the verse is chastity. No adulterer has the right to marry a chaste woman and no adulteress has the right to marry a chaste man, except if the matter has not gone to court and the two purify themselves of this sin by sincere repentance. The words مُحْصِنَةٍ عَيْرٌ مُسَافَّهَيْنَ point to this pre-requisite. At another place, the Qur'ān says:

الرَّانِي لَا يَنْكِحُ إِلَّا زَانِيَةً أَوْ مُشْرِكَةً وَالرَّانِيَةُ لَا يَنْكِحُهَا إِلَّا زَانٍ أَوْ مُشْرِكٍ وَحُرْمَمْ ذَلِكَ عَلَى
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٢٤: ٣)

The man guilty of fornication may only marry a woman similarly guilty or an idolatress and the woman guilty of fornication may only marry such a man or an idolater. The believers are forbidden such marriages.¹⁷ (24:3)

15. Genesis, 34:12; Exodus, 22:17

16. Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 2, 278.

17. Certain Ahādīth also clearly mention this aspect. See for example: Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 227, (nos. 2051-2052). For more details, see the chapter: "The Penal Sharī'ah".

It is obvious from this verse and also evident from divine scriptures that fornication and polytheism are exactly similar to one another. Just as it cannot be acceptable in any way that a husband or wife commit marital unfaithfulness, similarly, it is totally unacceptable for a Muslim that someone else besides the Almighty be worshipped in his house. In fact, this is more detestable a sin than sleeping with some other woman. This similarity between fornication and polytheism could have been deduced; however, the following Qur'ānic verse explicitly states it:

وَلَا شَكُونَوْا الْمُشْرِكَاتِ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنَ وَلَأَمَّةٌ مُؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ مُشْرِكَةٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبْتُكُمْ وَلَا شَكُونَوْا
الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنُوا وَلَعَذْدُ مُؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ مُشْرِكٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبْتُكُمْ (٢٢١:٢)

And wed not idolatrous women, unless they embrace faith, and [remember] a believing slave-girl is better than an idolatrous woman, although you may fancy her. And wed not your women to the Idolaters, unless they embrace faith. And [remember] a believing slave is better than an idolater, although you may fancy him.¹⁸ (2:221)

The Jews and Christians of the Prophet's times were also deeply incriminated with the filth of polytheism both in their beliefs and in their deeds. However, since they were basically monotheists, the Almighty was lenient enough to Muslims to allow marriage with their chaste women:

وَالْمُحْسَنَاتُ مِنْ الَّذِينَ أَوْتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ إِذَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ مُحْصِنَاتٍ عَيْرَ مُسَافِحَاتٍ
وَلَا مُتَّخِذِي أَخْدَانٍ (٥:٥)

And [lawful to you in marriage] are also chaste women from among these People of the Book before you when you give them their dowers with the condition that you desire chastity not lewdness nor becoming secret paramours. (5:5)

It is evident from the context of the above verse that this permission was granted when no confusion remained regarding *tawhīd* (monotheism) and it prevailed over the polytheistic Arab society in every manner. It should be kept in mind that the verse quoted above begins with the word *الْيَوْمُ* (this day). This word shows that the permission given was also very much dependent on the circumstances of those times: It was expected that if Muslim men would marry among the People of the Book these women would be positively influenced by Islam. In this way, not only would there be no clash between monotheism and polytheism, but also there was a great chance that most of them would accept

18. In 60:10, Muslims have been prohibited to marry the disbelievers (*kuffār*) because of their polytheism. It is evident from the verse that the *kuffār* it mentions signify the Idolaters of Arabia of the Prophet's times.

Islam.

Consequently, Muslims today must necessarily take this aspect into consideration if they want to benefit from this permission.

Similarly, it should be kept in mind that it is essential for the sanctity of the institution of family – the very institution marriage creates – that marriage takes place with the consent and presence of the elders of the family. There is no doubt about the fact that the decision of marriage is primarily taken by the concerned man and woman. However, if the marriage does not take place through the consent of the guardians or the elders of a family, then there must be a solid reason for this. In the absence of such a reason, a state has the authority to stop such a marriage from taking place.¹⁹ Narratives such as لَا نِكَاحٌ إِلَّا بِوْكَى (no marriage should take place without the [permission of] the guardian)²⁰ and other similar ones actually allude to this aspect. Since the rebellion of a lady in this matter can cause great disruption in a family, the Prophet (sws) made it clear upon the guardians through both his words and the measures he took that they must not take any decision in this regard without her consent. If the lady wants, their decision can be revoked.

It is narrated by Abū Hurayrah (rta) that the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: “A widow must not be married off without her consent and the consent of a virgin is [also] necessary.” People inquired: “How should her consent be obtained.” The Prophet answered: “If she stays quiet it means that she agrees to it.”²¹

Ibn ‘Abbās narrates from the Prophet (sws): “A widow can take her decision herself and permission must be sought from a virgin.”²²

Binti Khudhām says that when she became a widow, her father solemnized her marriage. She did not like the decision. So she came over to the Prophet (sws) and he gave her the permission to revoke her marriage.²³

4. Rights and Obligations of the Spouses

I

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ
قَاتَنَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِلْعَيْبِ بِمَا حَفَظَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُورَهُنَّ فَعَطُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي
الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنُكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَيِّلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْأَنَا كَبِيرًا (٤:٣٤)

Men are the guardians of women, because God has given the one more

19. This however does not mean that if a marriage has taken place without the consent of the parents, then it shall be declared illegal.

20. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 236, (no. 2085)

21. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1201, (no. 6968).

22. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 596, (no. 3476).

23. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 919, (no. 5138).

preference over the other, and because they financially support them. Consequently, pious women are obedient [to their husbands] and keep their secrets for Allah also keeps secrets. And as for those from whom you fear rebellion, admonish them [first] and [next] refuse to share their beds and [even then if they do not listen] punish them. Then if they obey you, take no further action against them. Indeed, Allah is Exalted and Mighty. (4:34)

In the verses preceding the above quoted verse, the Almighty has made it clear that the real sphere in which one should strive in outdoing others is not the sphere of inborn abilities and characteristics because in this sphere some in reality hold preference over others. The Almighty has created some people superior to others as regards their mental, physical, economic and social status. Similar is the case between a man and a woman. They have been created as counterparts such that one is by nature the active member and the other the passive one. While the former trait needs domination, vigour and force the latter needs gentleness, subtlety and acquiescence. Viewed thus, each possesses relative superiority to the other. These are inborn characteristics and any effort to surpass one another in this area would be tantamount to waging war against nature. This would of course only leave them to mourn their own misfortune.

The Almighty has pointed out that in contrast to this sphere, there is another sphere in which people should strive to outdo one another. This is the sphere of earning reward for oneself through good deeds, high character and virtue. The Qur'ān at various places has referred to this sphere by the comprehensive words "faith" and "righteous deeds". There is no restriction on anyone in striving to outdo others in this sphere; in fact, trying to surpass others in this sphere is as desirable as it is condemnable in the sphere of innate abilities. Both a man and a woman will earn great reward if they strive and exert themselves in this area. It is open for every person whether a bondsman or a free man, a person of high social status or low, good-looking or ugly, blind or blessed with the faculty of sight. If a person does want to become superior to others, it is this sphere that he should select for all his efforts and endeavours. Wasting one's effort in the wrong sphere only brings into existence clashes and disputes which are of no avail. Consequently, if he really wants to test his mettle and expend his energies, he must select the sphere of piety and virtue. The Qur'ān says:

وَلَا تَتَمَّنُوا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا أَكْتَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا أَكْتَسَبْنَ وَاسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا (٣٢:٤٠)

And in no way covet those things in which God has bestowed His favours on some of you than on others: to men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn. And ask God of His bounty. For God has full knowledge of all things. (4:32)

This verse pinpoints the above stated premise as the guiding principle in the organization of a family set-up. A family is like a small state. Just as every state

requires a ruler for its establishment and survival, this small state also requires someone to take charge of its helm. Either the husband could have been bestowed with this responsibility or the wife. The Qur'ān informs us that the husband has been entrusted with this responsibility. The expression قَوْمُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ has been used by the Qur'ān to convey this purport. In Arabic, when the preposition عَلَى is used after the verb قَامَ, the meanings of "protection" and "financial responsibility" are incorporated in the verb. This in other words refers to heading a family and all these things are mutually essential. The Qur'ān has given two reasons for this choice. While explaining these reasons, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

First, men have been granted superiority over women. There are certain innate abilities and traits in men which are more pronounced in him and because of which he has been made the head of a family unit. For example, a man is much more gifted innately to protect and to defend himself and to earn livelihood and to take the initiative than a woman. It should be appreciated here that the superiority men have over women is not absolute: it is only in certain spheres – spheres which entitle men to become head of the family unit. There are certain other spheres in which women are more superior to men but they do not entitle them to become the head of family. For example, a man does not have the extent of ability a woman has to take care of household affairs and to look after children. That is why the superiority which is mentioned in the verse is alluded to in an implicit manner such that it can be concluded that both men and women are superior to one another in different spheres;²⁴ however, a man is superior a woman as far as becoming the head of family is concerned.

Second, a husband bears financial responsibility for the wife. It is his obligation to earn and fulfil the needs of his wife and children. Obviously, this responsibility has not been assumed as a coincidence or as a favour, but because of the fact that only he is fully capable of doing so. He only has this ability and only he can fulfil its rights.²⁵

After declaring that the husband should head a family, the Qur'ān goes on to point out certain things to the wife for the smooth functioning of the institution of family. They are:

1. Wives should be obedient and adaptable to their husbands.
2. They should keep the secrets of their husbands and protect their honour and integrity.

The first of these things does not require elaboration. Without obedience and adjustment, no system can work whether it be a state or any other institution. This is the natural requirement of any system. In the absence of these attitudes,

24. Precisely for this reason, a mother occupies a higher status than the father. I will refer in detail to the view of the Qur'ān in this regard in a later section.

25. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 2, 291.

no system can function and will ultimately disintegrate by giving way to indiscipline and anarchy.

The expression حَافِظَاتُ الْغَيْبِ has been adopted for the second of these things. Generally, this expression has been taken to imply “guarding in absentia”. This writer has taken it to imply “keeping of secrets”, as this in his opinion is the correct connotation of the expression. While explaining the meaning of this expression, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

... one reason for adopting this meaning is that the word غَيْبٌ is very commonly used to imply “secrets”. Second, here the nature of the expression is such that it cannot be taken to mean “guarding in absentia”. Third, guarding of secrets is one of the most important issues between a husband and wife. They are the natural protectors of one another in this regard. The position of the wife is more important in this regard. She has full knowledge of her husband's weaknesses and strengths. She is well aware of what ensues in the house as well has full knowledge of the extent and nature of her husband's wealth and property. His honour and integrity rest with her. If she decides to reveal all his secrets, she can totally disgrace him. For this reason, the Qur'ān has specially mentioned this attribute of a wife. The addition of the words حَفَظَ اللَّهُ is very meaningful and refers to the exalted status of this attribute: it is in fact a manifestation of a divine attribute in man. The Almighty also keeps secrets of His creatures. If He starts revealing their secrets, everyone would be totally humiliated.²⁶

Thus the above verse outlines the attitude of pious wives. As a natural outcome of this directive, wives who adopt a rebellious attitude or reveal household secrets are not pious in the eyes of the Almighty.

However, if a wife becomes rebellious, can a husband punish her? The Qur'ān has replied to this question in the affirmative. The verse refers to the rebellion of a wife by the word تُشَوِّرُ . Literally, it means “to defy authority”; however, it is predominantly used for the utter defiance of authority a wife shows to the husband. Obviously, the word is not used for a blemish or for an instance of indifference by the wife. Similarly, it does not imply that a wife cannot express her opinion, taste or the various traits of her personality. It implies the behaviour which a wife adopts when she seems inclined to challenge the authority of the husband and disrupt the discipline of the house. If the situation reaches this extent, the Almighty has given the husband three options:

First, he should urge his wife to mend her ways. The word used by the Qur'ān is وَعَظَ which means that she can be admonished and also scolded to some extent in this regard.

Second, intimate marital relations with her should be suspended in order to communicate to her that if she does not mend her ways she might have to face severe repercussions.

Third, she should be punished physically. This punishment should obviously be

26. Ibid., vol. 2, 292.

similar to the one a teacher gives to a student or what a father gives to his children. The Prophet (sws) has used the words **غَيْر مُبَرِّح** which refers to a punishment which does not leave a permanent mark.²⁷

It is evident from the style of the verse that a gradual sequence should be adopted in exercising these options. In other words, the second step after the first and the third after the second should only be adopted if the husband is convinced that there is no other option but to go on to the next step. These measures point to the utmost limit to which a husband can go regarding admonishing his wife. The Qur'ān says that if the wife mends her ways through these measures a husband should not look for revenge and vengeance. He is warned thus: إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْهَا كَبِيرًا (indeed, God is exalted and mighty). The implication is that if the Lord of the heavens and the earth forgoes the arrogance of His creatures and forgives them if they repent, His creatures should also not misuse their authority over others.

II

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَاءَ كَرْهًا وَلَا تَعْصُلُوهُنَّ لَتَذَهَّبُوا بِيَقْنُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِنَّ بِفَاحشَةٍ مُّبِينَةٍ وَعَاقِرُوْهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوْا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا (٤:١٩)

Believers! You are forbidden to forcibly inherit women. Nor by treating them with harshness should you may take away part of what you have given them – except where they have been guilty of open lewdness; and live with them befittingly. Because if you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good. (4:19)

These verses mention the rights of women and instruct the society regarding the correct behaviour to be adopted with them.

The first thing pointed out is that women are not assets or animals which a person may inherit and then use them the way he likes. They too are human beings who have an independent personality. They are given free will which they can fully exercise in the limits set forth by the Almighty. The background of giving this directive is that in certain sections of pre-Islamic Arabia, the wives of a person were also transferred to his heirs like his wealth and animals would be, and if he had sons, they would even establish sexual relations with these step mothers without any hesitation. The Qur'ān sought to put an end to this ignominious custom and stressed that women are fully free to make their decisions. Nothing can be imposed upon them without their consent.

The second thing stressed here is that even if a believer dislikes his wife, he should not subject her to harsh treatment in order to recover any wealth or property that he has gifted her. Such an attitude can only be accepted if the wife is guilty of open sexual transgression. If the wife is not guilty of such behaviour

27. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 513-516, (no. 2950).

and is living as a faithful and obedient lady leading a virtuous life, it is totally against justice and decency for the husband to harass her merely because he dislikes her. No doubt if a wife shows moral misconduct then this is a detestable thing, but no husband is allowed to deprive her of a decent living because he does not like her looks or because her temperament is different from his.

The third thing emphasized here is that a husband who does not like his wife should still deal with her in accordance with the norms of justice and equity, graciousness and decency – to which his own nature testifies. The words used in the verse to convey this meaning are وَعَاشُوْهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ. The word مَعْرُوفٌ implies good conventions and traditions of a society. In other words, the Qur'ān instructs a husband to adopt a befitting attitude with his wife in accordance with the good traditions of the society whether he likes her or not. He is told that if he treats her nicely in spite of his aversion to her, he might win the blessings of the Almighty both in this world and in the Hereafter.

While explaining the words used to convey the above mentioned meaning, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

Although the word used here is عَسَىٰ which in Arabic implies hope and expectation, those who are aware of the delicacies of the language know that when used on occasions such as this, it implies a promise from the Almighty. This reference points to the fact that those who give priority to higher human traits and values instead of appearance are promised great rewards from the Almighty for this sacrifice. Those who have actually embarked upon this track have borne witness to the veracity of this fact, and none other than God is the most truthful.²⁸

It is obvious from the above discussion that if a husband is required to behave decently even if he dislikes the wife, he is all the more required to be decent when there is no cause for this dislike. A wrong attitude in this regard would earn great displeasure of the Almighty.

In the sermon of the last *hajj*, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ لَكُمْ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمْ حَقًا وَنِسَائِكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ حَقًّا فَمَا حَقُّكُمْ عَلَى نِسَائِكُمْ فَلَا يُؤْطِئُنَّ فُرُشَكُمْ مِنْ تَكْرَهُونَ وَلَا يَأْذِنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ لِمَنْ تَكْرَهُونَ أَلَا وَحَقُّهُنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ تُحْسِنُوا إِلَيْهِنَّ فِي كِسْوَتِهِنَّ وَطَعَامِ

Indeed you have rights over women and they also have rights over you. You have the right that they neither permit into your homes nor sleep with anyone you dislike. Listen! Their right upon you is that you feed and clothe them in the best way [you are able to].²⁹

28. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 2, 270.

29. Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 417, (no. 1851).

5. Polygamy

وَإِنْ خَفِتُمْ أَلَا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكحُوهُ مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ مُثْنَىٰ وَثُلَاثَةَ وَرِبَاعَ فَإِنْ حَفِظْتُمْ أَلَا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى أَلَا تَعُولُوا وَأَئْنَوْ النِّسَاءَ صَدِقَاتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةٌ فَإِنْ طَبِنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِّنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوهُ هَيْنَا مَرِيعًا (٤ : ٣-٤)

And if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry [their mothers] who are lawful to you, two two, three three, four four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly [with them], then only one, or those which your right hands possess. That will be more suitable to prevent you from doing injustice. And give these women their dowers also the way dowers are given; but if they, of their own good pleasure, remit any part of it to you, take it and consume it gladly. (4:3-4)

The addressees of the above quoted verses are the guardians of the orphans. They are directed to marry the mothers of the orphans who are lawful to them if they fear that they would not be able to do justice to the onerous responsibility of protecting the rights of the orphans and taking care of their wealth and property. In other words, if they decide that if the mothers of the orphans share with them this responsibility they would be able to discharge it in a better way, they should go ahead and marry them. The reason is that the extent to which mothers are attached to their orphaned children, no other person can ever be.

It is evident from this explanation that the above quoted verses were not primarily revealed to state any directive regarding polygamy. They were actually revealed to make use of the pre-existing practice of polygamy in Arabia for the welfare of the orphans. At other places, the Qur'ān has clearly alluded to the fact that as per the norms of human nature, the real benefits and advantages of the institution of family manifest themselves in a monogamous family. Consequently, it is stated in various verses that the father of mankind: Adam (rta) was blessed with one wife. It is basically social, psychological, political and cultural needs from which arose the need for polygamy. Such needs existed in various societies to different extents. To cater for these very needs the Almighty never forbade this practice in the *sharī'ah* He gave in various periods of time. Here, in these verses, Muslims are directed to make use of this practice to solve a social problem that had arisen in the time of the Prophet (sws). However, it has been made conditional upon two things:

First, even for as noble an objective as the welfare of orphans, a person cannot marry more than four wives.

Second, if a person is not able to deal justly with all four wives he should not marry more than one. Justice is a value that has to be maintained at all costs and cannot be sacrificed even for such a noble cause.

What are the limits of this justice? If this means equality in a person's inner inclination and his outer behaviour, then this is not possible for any person. If a

person while being married to a wife he greatly loves marries a widow for the welfare of the orphans, it is impossible for him to show equal love and behaviour for both these wives. Consequently, this very question had arisen in the period of the revelation of the Qur'ān. So in 4:127-130 an answer was given to this question.

In these verses, it is first explained that whether marriage has taken place to protect the rights of the orphans or for some other purpose, payment of dower and discharging of justice are the rights of a woman and the former must be given with the willingness of the heart, as is also pointed out in 4:3. Women are then counselled that if they fear that husbands may show indifference to them or even think of parting ways with them because of their insistence to be treated equally, it is alright if a husband and wife settle for a compromise. The Qur'ān says:

وَإِنْ امْرَأًةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُوزًا أَوْ إِغْرَاصًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا وَالصُّلْحُ
خَيْرٌ وَأَحْضَرَتِ الْأَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ وَإِنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَقَوَّا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ حَبِيرًا (٤: ١٢٨)

And if [any of these] women fears cruelty or neglect on her husband's part, there is no blame on the two of them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves and [they should consider that] such a settlement is best. And, [in reality], man is greedy by nature. But if you do good and practice self-restraint [you should rest assured that] Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do. (4:128)

While explaining the above quoted verse, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

... this means that a wife may show lenience to her husband in her demand for justice as well as payment of dower and maintenance to her in order to dispense with the imminent fear of separation. The verse goes on to say that in settlements rest the welfare of all because it is in the interest of both husband and wife that this relationship once established should continue forever, even if a lot of sacrifice has to be made to keep it intact. Continuing with words of counsel, the verse says that greed is an evil found in human beings that affects mutual relationships; the remedy for this malady is that either both should get ready to make some sacrifice or if one of them is ill-enough by not being willing to do so, the other should take the initiative. So if the wife has to make some sacrifice to keep the family unit intact, it is better that she does so. In the end, the words: "but if you do good and practice self-restraint" of the verse urge the husband to adopt the way of sacrifice and selflessness and it is only befitting that he show magnanimity and piety in this regard. He should live up to his traditions of grit and character and instead of being a "receiver" from the woman, he should let her be the "receiver". The Almighty has knowledge of every deed a person does and He will greatly reward pious deeds.³⁰

The subsequent verses delineate the bounds of justice in the following words:

30. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 2, 399.

وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِعُوا أَنْ تَعْدُلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلُّ الْمَيِّلِ فَتَذَرُّوهَا كَالْمُعْلَقَةِ وَإِنْ تُصْلِحُوهَا وَتَتَقْوِيُوهَا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا وَإِنْ يَتَفَرَّقَا يُعْنِي اللَّهُ كُلُّا مِنْ سَعَتِهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيمًا (١٣٠-١٢٩:٤)

And even if it is your ardent desire, you will never be able to be totally just between women; so it is enough if you do not completely incline yourself to a woman altogether, so as to leave the other aside. And if you come to a friendly understanding, and fear Allah; Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. But if they disagree and [eventually] must part, Allah will provide abundance for each from His bounty. And He is Bountiful and Wise. (4:129-130)

It is evident from the above quoted verses that the requirement of justice between wives does not mean justice between them regarding the husband's inner inclination or external behaviour. It is humanly impossible to be just in this matter because one has no power over one's heart in such affairs. Therefore, in this regard, the Qur'ān requires of a husband to not completely lean towards one of the wives and show indifference to the other, as if she had no husband. Consequently, he is asked to show balance in his behaviour towards them and in discharging their rights. In case of any fault or blemish in this matter, he should at once try to reform the state of affairs by making amends and should keep fearing the Almighty. If in spite of the effort some thing remains amiss, hopefully the Almighty will have mercy on him: Allah's mercy is all-embracing.

The last part of the verse stresses that one should try everything to save the family from dismemberment. This is what Allah wants. However, if owing to compelling circumstances, separation does take place, one should hope for the best from the Almighty. It is He who provides sustenance to His creatures and assists them in hardships. He would fully help both the husband and the wife and fulfil their needs through His grace. Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī writes:

... the implication being that efforts that reflect selflessness and sacrifice are required from both the husband and wife in order to keep this relationship intact; however, this restoration must be done with honour and integrity: just as it is not permissible for either the husband or wife to show vanity in this regard, it is also not permissible to show accommodation beyond a certain point. Although the words used are general, it is evident from the context that the wife is encouraged to adjust and adapt to the situation as much as is possible and also show selflessness to achieve this end. However, she should rest assured that if in spite of her efforts the family does not remain intact, the Almighty is the one who provides and sustains all. He will completely fulfil her needs from His treasures.³¹

31. Ibid., vol. 2, 400.

Here, it should be kept in mind that the Prophet (sws) was exempted from both the above-mentioned restrictions so that he could discharge certain responsibilities that were entrusted to him in his capacity as the final Messenger of God. Consequently, in order to raise the status of slaves in the society, the Prophet (sws) had wedded together his paternal cousin Zaynab (rta) and his liberated slave and adopted son Zayd (rta). However, when this marriage could no longer be pulled along, the Almighty bade the Prophet (sws) to marry her to comfort and solace her and to put an end to the evil social custom according to which a person could not marry the wife of his adopted son. At that time, the Prophet (sws) already had four wives. The Prophet (sws) himself thought that perhaps marrying Zaynab (rta) was the only way out because of what ensued between her and Zayd (rta), but he never expressed these thoughts. The Almighty revealed these inner thoughts and told him that the messengers of Allah do not care about the reaction of people while discharging their responsibilities. Consequently, the Prophet's marriage with Zaynab (rta) was proclaimed by the Almighty Himself in the Qur'ān:

وَإِذْ تَقُولُ لِلَّذِي أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْسَاكٍ رَوْحَكَ وَاتْقِ اللَّهَ وَتُخْفِي فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا
اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ وَتَخْشَى النَّاسَ وَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَاهُ فَلَمَّا قَضَى زَيْدٌ مِنْهَا وَطَرَا زَوْجَهَا كَمَا لَكَيْ لَا يَكُونَ
عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ فِي أَزْوَاجِ أَدْعِيَائِهِمْ إِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرَا وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا (٣٧:٣٢)

And remember [O Prophet!] When you were repeatedly saying to one who had received the favour of Allah and your favour: "Retain your wife, [in wedlock] and fear Allah." And you were hiding in your heart that which Allah was about to make manifest: you were fearing the people, but it is more fitting that you should fear Allah. Then when Zayd broke his relationship with her, We joined her in marriage to you so that in future there may be no difficulty on the believers in the matter of marriage with the wives of their adopted sons when the latter have dissolved their relationship [of marriage] with them. And this command of Allah had to be fulfilled. (33:37)

Right after this proclamation, the Almighty revealed detailed directives specifically for the Prophet (sws) regarding marriage and divorce. In these directives, the above quoted conditions for polygamy were repealed but certain other restrictions were imposed on him that were not imposed on other Muslims:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ أَزْوَاجَكَ الَّتِي أَتَيْتَ أُجُورَهُنَّ وَمَا مَلَكْتَ بِمِيرِنَكَ مِمَّا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ
وَبَنَاتِ عَمِّكَ وَبَنَاتِ عَمَّاتِكَ وَبَنَاتِ خَالِكَ وَبَنَاتِ خَالَاتِكَ الَّتِي هَاجَرْنَ مَعَكَ وَامْرَأَةً مُؤْمِنَةً إِنْ
وَهَبَتْ نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ إِنْ أَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ أَنْ يَسْتَنكِحَهَا حَالَصَةً لَكَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا
فَرَضَنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِي أَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَمَا مَلَكْتَ أَيْمَانُهُمْ لَكِنَّا يَكُونُ عَلَيْكَ حَرَجٌ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا
رَحِيمًا ثُرْجِيَّ مَنْ شَاءَ مِنْهُنَّ وَثُوُّبِيَ إِلَيْكَ مَنْ شَاءَ وَمَنْ ابْتَغَيْتَ مِمَّنْ عَزَّلْتَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكَ

ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى أَنْ تَقْرَأَ أَعْيُنَهُنَّ وَلَا يَحْزُنَ وَيَرْضُوْنَ بِمَا آتَيْتُهُنَّ كُلُّهُنَّ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْمًا حَلِيمًا لَا يَحْلُّ لَكَ النِّسَاءُ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَلَا أَنْ تَبْدِلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكَ حُسْنُهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِينُكَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رَّقِيبًا (٣٣-٥٢)

O Prophet! We have made lawful to you the wives whom you have paid their dowers and free women whom God gives in your possession [because of a military campaign] and the daughters of your paternal uncles and aunts and the daughters of your maternal uncles and aunts who migrated [from Makkah] with you and any believing woman who gifts her soul to the Prophet on the condition that the Prophet wishes to marry her. This directive is specifically for you alone and not for the believers. We very well know what We have imposed on them as obligations regarding their wives and slave girls – [a special directive for you] so that that there be no difficulty for you [in discharging your duties] and [and in case of any blemish], Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. You have the authority to keep any of them away from you and keep any of them near you and it is lawful for you to bring any of them near you whom you have kept away. There is no blame on you in this regard. This [explanation] is more proper so that they be contented and not be sorrowful – and feel satisfied with whatever you give all of them. And Allah knows what is in your hearts and Allah is All-Knowing and Most-Forbearing. All other women besides these are not lawful for you nor can you change them for other wives, even though their beauty attracts you. Slave-girls, however [are still] allowed to you. And [in reality] Allah does watch over all things. (33:50-52)

The statutes on which this group of directives is based are:

Firstly, after contracting marriage with Zaynab (rta), the Prophet (sws) could marry further for the following objectives:

- i. To honour free women who were caught as captives in some military campaign.
- ii. To show kind-heartedness to women who wanted to marry him just for the sake of associating themselves to him, and for this they were ready to gift themselves to him.
- iii. To console and sympathize with his maternal or paternal cousin sisters who had migrated with him from Makkah and left their houses and relatives merely to support and back him.

Secondly, since these marriages of the Prophet (sws) were to be contracted only to fulfil certain religious obligations, he was not required to deal equally between the wives.

Thirdly, except for the women specified, he was prohibited to marry any other lady;³² he could also not divorce any of his wives nor bring a new one in her place however much he liked her.

32. Consequently, because of these restrictions, the Prophet (sws) could not marry Māriyah (rta) and she remained in his house as a slave lady.

Consequently, the Prophet (sws) married Jawayriyah (rta) and Ṣafiyah for the first objective outlined above, Maymūnah (rta) for the second and Umm-i Ḥabībah (rta) for the third.

It is also pointed out in these verses that the wives of the Prophet (sws) are the mothers of the believers; consequently, marriage is eternally prohibited with them. No Muslim should even think of marrying them after the Prophet's death:

الَّتِي أَوْلَى بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ (٦:٣٣)

The Prophet holds priority for the believers over their own selves, and his wives are their mothers. (33:6)

وَلَا أَنْ شَكُحُوا أَزْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَبْدًا إِنْ ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا (٥٣:٣٣)

Nor is it right for you that you should marry his widows after him at any time. Truly such a thing is abominable in Allah's sight. (33:53)

It is evident from this discussion that these marriage directives were given to Muhammad (sws) as a religious obligation in his capacity as a Prophet and a Messenger of God. He followed these directives and there was no element of personal desire in these marriages. Consequently, the need arose to make these directives an exception to the general ones given to the Muslims in this regard.

6. Etiquette of Sexual Intimacy

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ قُلْ هُوَ أَذْيٌ فَاعْتَرُلُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيضِ وَلَا تَقْرُبُوهُنَّ حَتَّىٰ يَطْهُرْنَ فَإِذَا تَطَهَّرْنَ فَلْتُوھُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمْرَكُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ نِسَاءً كُمْ حَرَثُ لَكُمْ فَأُتُوا حَرَثَكُمْ أَنَّىٰ شِئْتُمْ وَقَدْمَوْا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ وَأَتَقْنُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ مُلَاقُوهُ وَبِشَّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٢: ٢٢٣-٢٢٤)

And they ask you concerning women's courses. Tell them: "They are an impurity. So keep away from women in their courses and do not approach them until they have cleansed themselves from blood. But when they have purified themselves after taking a bath, approach them in the manner the Almighty has directed you [in your instincts]. Indeed, Allah loves those who constantly repent and keep themselves clean." These women of yours are your cultivated land; go, then, into your lands in any manner you please [and through this] plan for the future³³ [of both this and the next world] and remain fearful to God. And bear in mind that you shall necessarily meet Him [one day]. And [O

33. The implication being raising children that become an asset for their parents in this world and in the Hereafter. The reason for this directive is to create awareness among parents of the great responsibility of a new child so that they may plan properly.

Prophet!] Give good tidings [of success and salvation] to the believers [on that Day]. (2:222-223)

Sexual relations between a man and a woman stem from their instincts and they do not need any external guidance in this matter. However, can a husband and wife have sexual intercourse when the wife is passing through her menstrual or puerperal cycle? It is evident that the answer to this question should be in the negative because the very objective of religion is *tazkiyah* (purification). Consequently, all divine religions prohibit sexual relations during this period. Under the influence of the religion of Abraham (sws), the Arabs of pre-Qur’ānic times also considered this relationship to be prohibited. Their poetry mentions this relationship covering a number of aspects. There was no difference of opinion in this matter. However, there were lots of extremes regarding the limits of physical interaction during the time a lady was passing through her menstrual cycle. When people started asking about these limits, the Qur’ān answered the question in the above quoted verses of Sūrah Baqarah. While explaining these verses, Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī writes:

The extent to which a husband has been stopped from going near his wife in this period is evident from the Qur’ānic words mentioned subsequently وَلَا تَقْرُبُوهُنَّ حَتَّىٰ يَطْهُرْنَ فَإِذَا نَطَهُرْنَ فَأُنْوَهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمْرَكُمُ اللَّهُ (and do not approach them until they are in a state of purity; then when they are clean after having bathed, go to them from where God has enjoined you). Only sexual intercourse is prohibited with the wife during this period. It should certainly not be the case that a woman be considered untouchable in this period, as was the case in certain other religions.³⁴

Some Ahādīth and the practice of the Prophet (sws) also elucidate this fact. It is narrated about ‘Ā’ishah (rta) that during her menstrual cycle she would comb the hair of the Prophet (sws) when he would be offering *i’tikāf* in the mosque.³⁵

It is further narrated from her that the Prophet (sws) would read the Qur’ān while placing a pillow in her lap.³⁶

In another Ḥadīth narrated from her she says that when any of the wives of the Prophet (sws) would be undergoing her menstrual cycle and the Prophet (sws) wanted to be intimate with her, he would direct her to tie a loin cloth on the lower part of the body and he would then approach her.³⁷

She further narrates that when she would drink water in her menstrual cycle and then give the same water to the Prophet (sws), he would put his lips on the same place [on the vessel] from which she had drunk. Similarly, when she would chew and suck on a bone and then give it to the Prophet (sws), he would place his lips

34. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 1, 526.

35. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 52, (no. 296).

36. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 52, (no. 297); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 138, (no. 693).

37. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 53, (no. 302).

on the same part of the bone where she had placed them.³⁸

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

Two words are used in this verse: طهْر (*tuhr*) and تَطْهِير (*tatahhur*). The former means the end of the state of impurity and the termination of blood while the latter means the state of purity a lady enters into after the ceremonial bath. The verse regards طهْر (*tuhr*) as a condition for intercourse with the wife and it also says that once a lady has entered the state of purity, only then should the husband approach her for this purpose. It emanates from this that though the basic reason for this prohibition is blood and once the blood stops this prohibition is lifted, however the desirable way in this regard is to have intercourse after she has bathed.³⁹

It is also explained in the above quoted verses that after the ceremonial bath, sexual intercourse with the wife should be done in the way prescribed by the Almighty. The Qur’ānic words are: فَأَنْوَهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمْرَكُمُ اللَّهُ فَأَنْوَهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمْرَكُمُ اللَّهُ (go to them from where God has enjoined you). This guidance is ingrained in human nature and from this aspect it, no doubt, is a directive of the Almighty. If a person violates this directive he in fact violates a very obvious directive of the Almighty, and, as a result, will have to face punishment from Him.

The metaphor of “cultivated land” is employed by the Qur’ān to explain what is stated in the previous verses. Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī comments on this in the following words:

One very apparent reason for using this metaphor is the fact that just as for a cultivated land it is essential on the part of the farmer that seeds be sown in the appropriate season at the right time, and no farmer disregards the principle that they be sown within the fields and not scattered outside them, similarly it is a norm of human instinct that one should not approach a lady for sexual intercourse during the menstrual cycle or in an unnatural way because the period of menses is a time during which women are frigid and not inclined, while unnatural intercourse is a painful and wasteful activity. Therefore, people who have not perverted their nature cannot indulge in such an activity.⁴⁰

While explaining the expression فَأَنْوَا حَرَثَكُمْ أَجَى شَتْمُونْ (go then, into your lands in any manner you please), Islāhī goes on to write:

... [this] alludes simultaneously to two things: on the one hand, it refers to the liberty, freedom and free manner with which a farmer approaches his land, and on the other hand refers to the responsibility, caution and care which he

38. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 138, (no. 692).

39. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 1, 526.

40. Ibid., vol. 1, 527.

must exercise in approaching his land. The word حُرْثٌ refers to the latter and the word شَنْمُّ to the former. It is both this liberty and caution which ascertain the correct behaviour of a husband with his wife in this regard.

Everyone knows that the real bliss of married life is the freedom a person has in intimate affairs barring a few broad restrictions. The feeling of this freedom has a great amount of euphoria around it. When a person is with his wife in intimate moments, Divine will seems to be that he be overcome with emotions but at the same time it is pointed out to him that he has come into a field and an orchard; it is no wasteland or a forest. He may come to it in whatever manner and in whatever way whenever he pleases, but he must not forget that he has landed in his orchard. The Qur'ān has no objection on the discretion, choice and majesty with which he approaches his field if he knows full well where he is going and in no way is oblivious of this reality.⁴¹

The importance of all these directives is pointed to by the Qur'ān in the words إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ (God indeed loves those who repent and those who adhere to cleanliness). While explaining the importance of these words in the eyes of the Almighty, Islāhī writes:

... if one deliberates on the essence of *tawbah* and *taṭāhhur*, one comes to the conclusion that while the former means to cleanse one's inner-self from sins, the latter means to cleanse one's outer-self from filth and dirt. Viewed thus, both are similar in their essence and the Almighty holds both these traits of a believer in great admiration. On the other hand, people who lack these traits are disliked by the Almighty. It is evident from the context of this verse that those who do not refrain from intercourse with their wives during their periods of impurity and violate the limits ingrained in human nature in satisfying their sexual urge are detestable in the eyes of the Almighty.⁴²

7. ॥ا

لِلَّذِينَ يُؤْلُمُونَ مِنْ نِسَائِهِمْ تَرْبُصُ أَرْبَعَةُ أَشْهُرٍ فَإِنْ فَاعُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ وَإِنْ عَرَمُوا الظَّلَاقَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٢ : ٢٢٦-٢٢٧)

Those who swear to abstain from their wives must wait four months. If they change their mind, Allah is Forgiving and Ever-Merciful; but if they decide to divorce them, [they should know that] He hears all and knows all. (2:226-227)

These verses of Sūrah Baqarah mention the directive of لِيَلِاءٍ. This is a term of the Arab *jāhiliyyah* society which means to swear an oath to sever sexual

41. Ibid., vol. 1, 527.

42. Ibid., vol. 1, 526.

relations with one's wife. Such an oath leaves the wife in an indefinite state and is as such against justice and fairness, virtue and piety. Consequently, the Almighty has fixed a four month period after which a husband must decide to either resume the marital relationship or to divorce her.

About the first situation, the Almighty says that He is Forgiving and Ever-Merciful. The implied meaning being that although this oath was sworn to usurp rights and it is not lawful to swear such oaths, but if a person mends his ways the Almighty shall forgive him.

In such a case, the husband would of course have to atone the termination of his oath in the way prescribed by the *sharī‘ah*.

Regarding the second situation, the Almighty says that He hears all and knows all. In other words, what is implied is that if a person decides to divorce his wife, then he must abide by the rules and regulations that the Almighty has prescribed in this regard. Allah hears and knows everything. Excesses committed against someone else will not remain concealed from Him.

It is evident from this directive that it is not allowed to sever sexual relations from one's wife without a valid reason. So much so, if a person swears such an oath, he must break it. Such relations are the right of a wife and if a husband does not fulfil them, then he can be regarded a criminal both in the eyes of the law and before the Almighty in the Hereafter.

In return, the wife also does not have the right to refuse compliance to these relations without a valid reason. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

إِذَا دَعَا الرَّجُلُ امْرَأَتَهُ إِلَى فِرَاشِهِ فَأَبَتْ بَقِيَاتَ غَضْبَانَ عَلَيْهَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ حَتَّى تُصْبِحَ

When a husband calls his wife to bed for intimacy, and she refuses and [as a result] the husband spends the night in anger, then angels curse the wife all night till dawn.⁴³

8. Zihār

الَّذِينَ يُظَاهِرُونَ مِنْكُمْ مِنْ نِسَائِهِمْ مَا هُنَّ أَمْهَاتُهُمْ إِلَّا اللَّائِي وَلَدْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَيَقُولُونَ
مُنْكِرًا مِنْ الْقَوْلِ وَرَوْرًا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَفُوٌ غَفُورٌ وَالَّذِينَ يُظَاهِرُونَ مِنْ نِسَائِهِمْ ثُمَّ يَعُوذُونَ لِمَا قَالُوا
فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَتَمَاسَّ ذَلِكُمْ ثُوعَظُونَ بِهِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامَ
شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَتَمَاسَّ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فِطْاعَمَ سِتِّينَ مِسْكِينًا ذَلِكَ لِئَلَّا مُنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ
وَتَلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٥٨: ٤-٢)

Those among you who commit *zihār* with their wives, they [–these wives–] cannot become their mothers: none can be their mothers except those who gave birth to them. And in fact such people say something very immoral and

43. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 540, (no. 3237).

false. And truly Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. And [in this matter the directive is that] those who do *zihār* with their wives then wish to go back on the words they uttered – then a slave should be liberated before they touch each other. Thus are you admonished to do and Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do. And if a slave is not available to a person, he should fast for two months consecutively before they touch each other. And if he is unable to do this even, he should feed sixty indigent ones. This is because you may show your faith in Allah and His Messenger. Those are limits set by Allah; [only the rejecters of Allah and His Messenger cross them]. And there is a grievous punishment for such rejecters. (58:2-4)

The above quoted verses spell out the directive of *zihār*. Like لِيَلْأَءُ, this was also a term of the Arab *jāhiliyyah* society. It meant that a husband had uttered the following words for his wife: أَنْتَ عَلَىٰ كَظَهَرِ اُمِّيْ (if I touch you, it would as if I touched the back of my own mother). These words in those times would amount to giving such a divorce to the wife after which a wife had to be separated from her husband. The Arabs would think that by saying such words a husband is not only severing marital ties with his wife, he is also prohibiting her for himself like his own mother. Consequently, though after divorcing a wife a husband had the right to revoke it, but after doing *zihār* there was no chance left for him for any revocation.⁴⁴

The Qur'ān here mentions this very directive.

The first thing which is stated in the above quoted verses is that if a person is unseemly enough to regard his wife as his mother or likens some limb of his wife to that of his mother, then such an utterance does not make the wife his mother and neither is she endowed with the sanctity a mother has. To be a mother is a reality since she has given birth to a person. The sanctity in relationship she is invested with is because of this very fact. This is an eternal and natural sanctity which only a real mother has. No other lady who is called by this name in such a manner can ever possess this sanctity. Consequently, such an utterance neither breaks marital ties nor does a wife become prohibited for a person like his mother. The Qur'ān, at another place, points to this aspect in the following words:

وَمَا جَعَلَ أَزْوَاجَكُمُ الْلَّائِي تُظَاهِرُونَ مِنْهُنَّ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ (٤:٣٣)

And Allah has not made your wives whom you divorce by *zihār* your mothers. (33:4)

The second thing which the verses of Sūrah Mujādalah quoted above point out is that if a person utters such a sentence then he should know that these are very indecent and fallacious words, which no civilized person can ever think of let alone uttering them. Such a person could have been heavily taken to task by the Almighty, but He is most gracious and most merciful. So if a person overcome

44. Jawwād 'Alī, *Al-Muṣṣal fī tārīkh al-'arab qabl al-islām*, vol. 5, 551.

by anger says these false and abominable words and then realizes his mistake, he shall be forgiven by the Almighty.

The third thing emphasized in the verses is that a person who utters these words shall not be allowed to go scot-free. Such lose talk gravely affects the social life, and thus it is essential that such a person be punished for this unbecoming behaviour so that he is careful in future and others also learn a lesson from this. Consequently, it is decreed that he must atone his sin before going near his wife in the following manner:

A slave-woman or a slave-man should be set free.⁴⁵

If slaves are not available, he should fast consecutively⁴⁶ for two months.

If this is also not possible, he should feed sixty indigent people.

The Almighty has said that if this directive is followed by the believers in its true spirit, their faith in God and His Prophet will be strengthened. The reason for this is that if a person atones for any of his sins by taking such pains, this not only compensates his sin, but also increases his faith and beliefs.

9. Divorce

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَطَلِقُوهُنَّ لَعَدَّتِهِنَّ وَأَحْصَوْا الْعَدَةَ وَأَنْتُمُوا اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَا تُخْرِجُوهُنَّ مِنْ بُيُوتِهِنَّ وَلَا يَخْرُجُنَّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُبِيِّنَةٍ وَتَلِكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ لَا تَدْرِي لَعْلَ اللَّهُ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ أَمْرًا فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجْلَهُنَّ فَامْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ فَارِقُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَأَشْهُدُوا ذَوَى عَدْلٍ مِنْكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلَّهِ ذَلِكُمْ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَنْ يَقِنَ اللَّهُ يَعْجِلُ لَهُ مَحْرَاجًا وَيَرْبُقُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ وَمَنْ يَتوَكَّلُ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسِيبٌ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَالْعَ أَمْرَهُ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا وَاللَّائِي يَسْنَنُونَ الْمَحِيطَ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمْ إِنْ ارْتَبَتْمُ فَعَدَّتِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةً أَسْهِرٍ وَاللَّائِي لَمْ يَحْضُنْ وَأُولَاتُ الْأَحْمَالِ أَجْلَهُنَّ أَنْ يَصْنَعُنَ حَمَلَهُنَّ وَمَنْ يَقِنَ اللَّهُ يَعْجِلُ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا ذَلِكَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ أَنْزَلَهُ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَنْ يَقِنَ اللَّهُ يُكَفِّرُ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ وَيُعَظِّمُ لَهُ أَجْرًا أَسْكَنُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ سَكَنْتُمْ مِنْ وُجْدِكُمْ وَلَا تُضَارُو هُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُو عَلَيْهِنَّ وَإِنْ كُنَّ أُولَاتِ حَمْلٍ فَأَنْفَقُو عَلَيْهِنَّ حَتَّى يَضَعُنَ حَمَلَهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَرْضَعْنَ لَكُمْ فَأَثْوَهُنَّ أَحْوَرَهُنَّ وَأَتَمْرُو بِيَنْكُمْ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَإِنْ تَعَاوَرُنُمْ فَسَتُرْضِعُ لَهُ أُخْرَى لِيُنْفِقَ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِنْ سَعَتِهِ وَمَنْ قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقٌ فَلِيُنْفِقْ مِمَّا آتَاهُ اللَّهُ لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَا آتَاهَا

45. The Arabic word used is رَبَّةٌ which means “neck”. This means that the gender of the slave does not matter. Whoever is available can be liberated to atone for the sin. This is one of the measures prescribed by Islam for the emancipation of slaves. Thus it has been set forth as the foremost option. After the abolishment of slavery only the last two options can now be availed.

46. The Arabic word used is مُتَتَابِعِينَ (consecutively). This means that if a person goes to his wife before he completes these fasts, then he must start afresh and finish the count.

سَيَحْكُلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا (٦٥: ٧-١)

O Prophet! When you people divorce your wives, divorce them according to their waiting periods, and count accurately this waiting period, and fear God your Lord. [During this waiting period], do not turn them out of their houses, nor should they [themselves] leave, except in case they are guilty of some open lewdness. These are the bounds set by Allah and [you should know that] those who transgress the bounds of Allah, it is they who wrong their own souls. You know not that God might thereafter create new circumstances. [Divorce your wives in this very manner]. Thus when they approach the end of their waiting period, either take them back on equitable terms or part with them on equitable terms. And [whether you want to keep them or part with them, in both cases] call to witness two honest people from among you. And [O Witnesses!] Establish this testimony for God. It is this thing to which those are exhorted who believe in God and in the Last Day. And [if] those who fear God [encounter any difficulty], God will find a way out for them and will provide them from where they cannot even imagine. And those who put their trust in God, for them Allah is enough [to help them]. God is sure to bring about His designs. God has set a measure for all things. And those of your women who have ceased menstruating and they also who have not menstruated [in spite of reaching its age], if you have any doubts about them, then their waiting period is three months. And the waiting period of pregnant women is till they deliver the child. God will ease the hardship of [those among you] who fear Him. Such is the directive of God He has revealed to you. He who fears God, God shall brush away his sins and shall richly reward him. [During the waiting period], lodge these women in your homes according to your means. And do not harass them to make life intolerable for them. And if they are pregnant, spend on them until they deliver the child. And if they suckle your [child], give them their remuneration and decide this matter according to the custom after mutual consultation. And if you find yourselves in difficulty, another woman can suckle [the child]. Let the man of means spend according to his means and he whose resources are restricted, spend according to what God has given him. God does not burden a person with more than He has given him. [Rest assured], after some difficulty, God will soon grant relief. (65:1-7)

If it becomes impossible for a husband and wife to get along with one another, there exists in divine religions the option of separation from one another. In religious parlance, this separation is called طلاق (*talāq*: divorce). As per the traditions of Abraham's religion, the Arabs were fully aware of it in the *jāhiliyyah* period. No doubt certain deviations and innovations had found way in their concept, however, a study of their history reveals that the law of divorce that existed in their society was almost the same as what Islam presented.⁴⁷ In the above quoted verses of Sūrah Ṭalāq, the Almighty has revived with certain

47. Jawwād ‘Alī, *Al-Muṣṣal fī tārīkh al-‘arab qabl al-islām*, vol. 5, 548.

additions and amendments that very law. Certain details of this law are also mentioned in Sūrah Baqarah and Sūrah Ahzāb, but a little deliberation shows that the basic verses in this regard are those of Sūrah Talāq stated above.

i. Before Divorce

Before circumstances reach an extent that divorce remains the only option, it should be the intense desire of every person to keep intact the marital relationship as far as possible. On these very grounds, in Sūrah Nisā’ the Almighty has permitted the husband to reprimand his wife if she is guilty of challenging his authority. However, if all efforts of reformation fail and it becomes evident that this relationship cannot remain intact, the Almighty has asked Muslims to make a last ditch effort: the relatives of the couple, their clan and tribe and other well wishers should come forward and use their influence to set right the situation. The procedure outlined by the Qur’ān in this regard is that one arbitrator should be appointed from the husband’s family and another from the wife’s family. Both these arbitrators should try to reconcile the two in the hope that what the husband and wife could not accomplish themselves would be accomplished by the elders and well wishers of the two families. The Qur’ān says:

وَإِنْ خَفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنَهُمَا فَابْعُثُوا حَكَمًا مِنْ أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا مِنْ أَهْلِهِا إِنْ تُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوقَنُ اللَّهُ
بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْمًا خَبِيرًا (٤:٣٥)

And if you fear a breach between the two, appoint arbitrators, one from his family, and the other from hers; if [the husband and wife] wish for peace, Allah will create harmony between them: for Allah has full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things (4:35)

The last words of the verse subtly urge the couple to benefit from this scheme. If, instead of severing ties, they wish to create harmony among themselves they should keep in mind that the Almighty is benevolent. He will help them in redeeming the situation.

ii. The Right to Divorce

The *sūrah* begins with the words: (إِذَا طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ) (when you [people] divorce your wives). In this verse, in the subsequent ones also and in other verses of the Qur’ān where the directive of divorce is mentioned, the husband has been regarded as the initiator of divorce. Moreover, in 2:229, the words used by the Qur’ān for returning the wealth of the husband and thereby seeking divorce from him are (فِيمَا أَفْتَدَتْ بِهِ) (what the woman gives in ransom). These words bear clear evidence to the fact that the *sharī‘ah* has granted the husband the right to divorce. The reason for this is quite obvious. A husband has always been charged with the responsibility of protecting his wife and providing for her because God has given him the natural ability to fulfil these responsibilities. On these very grounds, the Qur’ān has regarded him to be the *qawwām* (head of the family) and explicitly

stated: وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ ذِرْجَةٌ (and the husbands hold a degree of superiority over them). Consequently, both the nature of the responsibility and the respect for his position entail that he be given the right to divorce. I have explained earlier that the institution of family is an essential requirement of a human being. Just as entrusting two parties with different responsibilities but granting them equal rights to establish an organization or to dismantle it cannot keep that institution intact, the institution of family also cannot remain intact. Consequently, if a lady, in lieu of her own protection and subsistence and those of her children, has given herself in the custody of a man through a contract, then the right to annul this contract cannot be given to the lady without the permission of the husband. This is in accordance with justice and fairness. If any other option is adopted, then this would be against justice, and would inevitably result in the dismemberment of the institution of family.

As a consequence of the above analysis, if a wife wants to separate from her husband, she cannot divorce him; on the contrary, she will demand divorce from him. In general circumstances, it is hoped that every gentleman, seeing that there is no other way out, would accept this demand. However, if this does not happen to be the case, a wife can turn to the court of law. When the state of affairs deteriorates to this extent, then there is a precedence set by the Prophet (sws) in this regard for the judicial forums: if it becomes certain that a wife has an aversion to her husband and does not want to live with him any more, then the court should order the husband to divorce her and if he wants he can take back all the wealth and property that he gifted to her except the *mahr* (dower).

Ibn ‘Abbās narrates that the wife of Thābit ibn Qays once came to the Prophet (sws) and said: “O Messenger of Allah! I do not have any complaint regarding his character and person; however, I fear that I will lose my faith.”⁴⁸ When the Prophet heard this complaint, he said: “Would you return his orchard?” She showed her consent. At this, the Prophet (sws) directed Thābit to accept the orchard and separate her by pronouncing one divorce sentence.⁴⁹

iii. Procedure of Divorce

Whether a husband divorces his wife because of his own decision or does so at the demand of his wife, in both cases the procedure of divorce prescribed by the *shari'ah* is as follows:

1. Divorce should be given keeping in consideration the ‘*iddat* (waiting period). This means that it is incorrect to divorce a wife in a manner that separates her instantaneously. In all instances, it must be given so that it becomes effective after a specific waiting period. ‘*Iddat* in religious parlance means the period in

48. The meaning of this sentence as understood from other narratives in which this incident has been reported is that she did not like the looks of Thābit and that if in spite of that she persisted to live with him, she would not have been able to follow the directives the Almighty has given a Muslim wife viz. being faithful to her husband and guarding her own chastity.

49. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 943, (nos. 5273, 5277).

which a divorced or widowed lady cannot marry any other person. Since this period has been primarily fixed in order to ascertain whether a lady is pregnant or not, therefore it is necessary that divorce be given after a lady has completed her menstrual cycle in that period of cleanliness in which the husband did not have any sexual intercourse with his wife. Every Muslim should be fearful of his Lord about emotions of anger which on such instances do arise against the wife. Consequently, when the Prophet (sws) was told that ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar (rta) had divorced his wife during her menstrual cycle, he was really annoyed and remarked:

مُرْهٌ فَيُرِاجِعُهَا ثُمَّ لِيُمْسِكُهَا حَتَّى تَطْهَرْ ثُمَّ تَحِيسْ ثُمَّ تَطْهَرْ ثُمَّ إِن شَاءَ أَمْسَكَ بَعْدُ وَإِن شَاءَ طَلَقَ
قَبْلَ أَنْ يَمْسَسَ فَتَلْكَ الْعُدَّةُ الَّتِي أَمَرَ اللَّهُ أَنْ تُطْلَقَ لَهَا النِّسَاءُ

Ask him to take her back and keep her in wedlock until she is through with her menstrual cycle and then once again passes through this cycle and then is through with it.⁵⁰ After this, he can either detain her [in wedlock] or divorce her before having sexual intercourse with her. Because it is this beginning of the ‘iddat keeping regard of which the Almighty has directed [believers] to divorce their wives.⁵¹

The Almighty has directed Muslims to carefully keep count of the period of ‘iddat. Since divorce is a matter of great consequences, and a lot of legal issues arise for the man, the woman, their children and their whole family, it is essential that the time and date of divorce be properly accounted for. Moreover, it is essential that at the time of divorce, the state of the woman, the date when the ‘iddat commenced and the date when it will end be kept track of. Whether the whole issue is ultimately settled within the family or has to be taken to court for settlement, in both cases it is this period of ‘iddat which dictates the time span within which a husband can revoke his decision and take back his wife (*rujū'*). Similarly, it is this period which will determine the time for which the husband is liable to keep his wife in the house and provide for her. Likewise, the time when the inheritance is to be given to her and the time when the divorce process is complete and the lady is free to marry again shall be ascertained from the ‘iddat.

2. Until the ‘iddat period expires, the husband has the right to take back his wife. The Qur’ānic words: (۶۵:۲) فَإِذَا بَأْعَنْ أَجَلُهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ (thus when they approach their term appointed, either take them back on equitable terms or part with them on equitable terms (65:2)) refer to this fact. The Almighty has further explained in Sūrah Baqarah that just as the right to give divorce rests with the husband, this right to take back the wife also rests with him so that the Almighty has him granted one degree of superiority in status in

50. This directive of not giving divorce unless she has entered her period of purity after the second menstrual cycle is meant to make sure as much as possible whether his wife was pregnant or not.

51. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 938, (no. 5251).

administering the institution of family which is necessary to maintain order in it. This of course does not mean that only husbands have rights and wives have none. People must be aware that just as wives have certain duties regarding their husbands, they also have some rights. Mankind has never been ignorant of these rights; it is well aware of them. Consequently, it is the obligation of the husbands that besides asking their wives to fulfil their obligations towards them, they must also keep in mind their rights:

وَبِعُوْتِهِنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدَهَنَ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ
عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٢٨:٢)

And if their husbands wish to reform affairs, they [— the husbands—] have greater right to take them back [in this waiting period] should they desire reconciliation. And just as according to [society's] norms these women have obligations [towards their husbands], they also have rights, although men [as husbands] have a status above women. [This is the directive of Allah] and Allah is Mighty and Wise. (2:228)

Since there is a high probability that in such affairs one is bound to be governed by emotions and extreme reactions and as a result may commit one blunder after another, these two attributes of God – Mighty and Wise – mentioned at the end of the verse serve a special purpose. While referring to this purpose, Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī writes:

... God is 'Azīz (Mighty); hence, it is only His right to give this directive and He is also Ḥakīm (Wise); hence, whatever directive He gives is based on wisdom. Men should always submit to His directives without any hesitation whatsoever. If they oppose His directives, this would amount to challenging His honour and would only hasten to invite His wrath. Similarly, if they are naive enough to think that they are more wise and sagacious than the Almighty, they will be responsible for ruining the law and system of the society with their very own hands.⁵²

3. If the husband does not take back his wife within the '*iddat*' period, then once this period expires the relationship of wedlock will cease to exist. Consequently, the husband is directed to make up his mind once this period is approaching its end. He should decide if he has to revoke his decision and take her back or is to persist with his decision and sever his relationship with her. In both cases, the Almighty has directed him to follow the *ma'rūf* (good conventions) of the society. The Almighty comforts them by saying that those who remain fearful of Him should rest assured that they will be worthy of His help if they encounter any difficulty.

52. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 533.

It is pointed out in Sūrah Baqarah that if the husband decides to revoke his decision and take back his wife, then this should not be with the intention of hurting or harassing her. The verse of Sūrah Baqarah quoted above refers to this aspect in the words إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا. The revocation should not be to satisfy one's desire by tormenting the wife. In fact, the underlying reason for this revocation should be to lead a congenial marital life, otherwise this would just be an act of oppression which shall greatly displease the Almighty in the Hereafter:

وَإِذَا طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَعْنَ أَحَاهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرْحُونَ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ
ضَرَارًا لِتَعْتَدُوا وَمَنْ يَفْعُلْ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ وَلَا تَتَخَذُوا آيَاتَ اللَّهِ هُرُوًّا وَإِذْ كُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ
عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةُ يَعْظِمُكُمْ بِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ
عَلَيْمٌ (٢٣١:٢)

And when you have divorced your wives and they have reached the end of their waiting period, either retain them with kindness or let them go with kindness. But do not retain them with the intention of harm so that you commit excesses against them. And [you should know that] whoever does this, wrongs his own soul. And do not make a mockery of Allah's commandments. Remember the favours He has bestowed upon you and the Law and the wisdom which He has revealed, of which He instructs you. And keep fearing Allah and know that He has knowledge of all things. (2:231)

While explaining this verse, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

... in the previous verses, the implied meanings were stated positively, but here they are stated negatively in order to caution cruel husbands who could abuse the right of divorce as well as the right to revoke it in the 'iddat period. Such an attitude, of course, is outright injustice and amounts to playing with the *sharī'ah*. Those who are bold enough to do this may think that they are oppressing their wives; however, in fact, they wrong their own selves. This is because those who toy with divine directives and exceed the limits set by the Almighty shall have to face a grievous punishment.

In the end, a reminder is sounded regarding the blessings of the Almighty: He has made Muslims a chosen *ummah* and sent a Prophet to them from among them to guide them. He has also blessed them with a book to guide them regarding good and evil. It is composed of the precepts of law and wisdom. If they repay this great favour by violating the limits of the Almighty and toying with His *sharī'ah*, then they should contemplate the consequences of such a behaviour. The verse goes on to warn Muslims to remain fearful of the Almighty and to keep in mind that He has knowledge of all their deeds. In other words, He is granting respite to people in spite of their mischief. However, once He decides to catch them, no one will be able to run away

from His grasp.⁵³

Similarly, if a husband decides to part ways with his wife, he is directed to do so in a befitting manner. The words used in 2:220 are تَسْرِيْحٌ بِاْخْسَانٍ. In this regard, the following directives have been given:

Firstly, whatever amount of wealth, property, clothes, jewellery and other items that have been gifted to the wife by the husband they should not be confiscated by him. Here it should be clear that the verse is not referring to the *nafqah* (maintenance) and *mahr* (dower), which are the absolute rights of a wife and confiscating them is unthinkable. What is emphasized is that a husband should not take back any gifts he may have given her.

There are two exceptions to the above mentioned directive:

First, if it is no longer possible to keep a marriage intact according to the limits set by Allah, and the family elders and the society also support the annulment, but a husband is unwilling to divorce his wife simply because he is concerned about losing wealth, property or other gifts he has given his wife, then the issue can be resolved in the following manner: the wife can give back part or all of the wealth gifted to her to relieve herself of her marital contract. In such cases, it would be lawful for the husband to accept these returned gifts.

Second, if the wife is guilty of open sexual misconduct. Since such a behaviour destroys the very basis of the marital relationship, it is lawful for the husband to take back any gifts or wealth given to her.

The Qur'ān says:

وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا مِمَّا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا إِلَّا أَنْ يَخَافَا أَلَا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ حَفْظُتْ أَلَا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٢٢٩:٢)

And it is unlawful for you [on this occasion] to take back from them anything you have given them unless both husband and wife fear that they may not be able to keep within the bounds set by Allah. Then if you also feel that they will not be able to remain within the bounds set by Allah, there shall be no offence for either of them [regarding the gifts given by the husband] if the wife seeks divorce [by returning them to him] in ransom. These are the bounds set by Allah; so do not transgress them. And [you should know that] those who transgress the bounds of Allah are wrongdoers (2:229)

وَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ لِتَنْدَهُبُوا بِعَضٍ مَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِقَاتِحَةَ مُبِينَ... وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ اسْتِبْدَالَ زَوْجٍ مَكَانَ زَوْجٍ وَآتَيْتُمْ إِحْدَاهُنَّ قِطْرَارًا فَلَا تَأْخُذُوهَا مِنْهُ شَيْئًا أَتَأْخُذُونَهُ بِهَتَّانًا وَإِنَّمَا مُبِينًا وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَى بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ وَأَنْجَدْنَ مِنْكُمْ مِيَثَاقًا غَلِيلًا (٤١-٤٩:٢)

53. Ibid., vol. 1, 539.

And do not treat them with harshness that you may take away what you have given them – except where they have been guilty of open lewdness... and if you decide to take one wife in place of another, even if you had given the latter a whole treasure of wealth take not the least bit of it back: Would you take it by slander and usurping [her] rights? And how can you take it when you have lain with each other and [at the time of marriage] they have taken from you a solemn covenant? (4:19-21)

For this second situation, a person has been warned not to dare take back by slander any wealth gifted to his wife. Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī writes:

... it is absolutely against the decency and integrity of a man to slander and accuse a lady with whom he had pledged to live forever under a firm marriage contract. It was she who had unveiled herself totally to him and both lived intimately and in great harmony with each other. How unseemly it is on the part of the husband that when relations had to be severed with her he should try to extract from her what he so willingly spent on her and should go as far as to malign and accuse her for this base purpose.⁵⁴

Secondly, the husband shall not be responsible to give the dower if the wife is divorced such that the husband has not touched her or her dower had not been fixed. However, if the dower had been fixed but a lady was divorced before having sexual relations with the husband, then the husband is liable to pay half the amount of the dower fixed except if the wife willingly forgoes the total amount or the husband pays the full amount. The Qur'ān says:

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ مَا لَمْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ أَوْ نَفَرُّضُوا لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً ... وَإِنْ طَلَقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ وَقَدْ فَرَضْتُمْ لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً فَنَصْفُ مَا فَرَضْتُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يَعْنُونَ أَوْ يَعْفُوَ الَّذِي يَبِدِيهِ عُقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ وَأَنْ يَعْفُوا أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَنْسَوْا الْفَضْلَ بَيْتُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٢٣٧-٢٣٦:٢)

There is no blame on you in the matter of dower if you divorce women before touching them or before fixing their dower ... and if you divorce them before touching them but after fixing of a dower for them, then the half of this fixed dower should be given to them, unless they forgo it or he forgoes it in whose hands is the marriage knot; and if you [men] forgo your right, it is nearer to piety. And do not forget your superiority among yourselves. For Allah sees well all that you do. (2:236-237)

While commenting on this verse, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī writes:

Although the fact that the husband has divorced the wife before conjugal contact was made is one motive for the wife to forgo her right, the Qur'ān

54. Ibid., vol. 1, 271.

here has urged the husband with regard to his honour and forbearance and his status as a husband to not desire from his wife to forfeit her share. Instead, he should show magnanimity in paying her the full amount. The Qur'ān has appealed to him on three grounds to make this sacrifice: Firstly, the Almighty has given him the right to untie the marital knot just as he had the right to tie it. Secondly, it is more befitting for the stronger sex to show sacrifice and selflessness – the manifestations of true piety. Thirdly, the one degree of superiority a husband has been blessed with by being made the head of the family unit since he was naturally suited for this task requires that he take into account this aspect while dealing with the weaker sex. Its natural requirement is that he should be on the giving end rather than being on the receiving end.⁵⁵

Thirdly, a wife at the time of parting should be given some resources of life. The Qur'ān says that this is an obligation of those who fear God and those who are righteous. If a lady is divorced even without going near her, a husband is exhorted to fulfil this obligation. The Qur'ān says:

وَلِلْمُطَّلِّقَاتِ مَتَاعٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ (٢٤١:٢)

And divorced women should also be given some resources according to the norms [of the society] when they are sent off. This is an obligation on those who are fearful of God. (2:241)

In Sūrah Ahzāb, the words فَمَنْعُوهُنَّ وَ سَرُحُوهُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا (but give them some resources [of life] and part with them in a befitting manner) are used to convey this meaning. In Sūrah Baqarah, this same directive has been given to husbands for wives whom they divorced without touching them or without fixing their dower. According to the Qur'ān, the amount of these resources should be ascertained keeping in view the norms of the society and the financial status of the husband:

وَمَنْعُوهُنَّ عَلَى الْمُوسِعِ قَدْرُهُ وَعَلَى الْمُقْتَرِ قَدْرُهُ مَتَاعًا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ حَقًا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ (٢٣٦:٢)

And bestow on them some resources of life while parting from them, the wealthy according to his means, and the poor according to his means. This is an obligation on those who are righteous. (2:236)

It is evident from these words that this is an obligation on the husband. If a person does not fulfil it, he might not be liable to any legal action because this is something which pertains to a person's inner piety and virtue, but he would definitely be held liable in the Hereafter before his Lord, and in the Hereafter the weight and import of his virtuous deeds would suffer.

4. If a husband revokes his decision within the 'iddat, the lady will continue to remain his wife, but does this mean that a husband can divorce his wife

55. Ibid., vol. 1, 548.

repeatedly in this fashion whenever he wants and then revoke the decision within the ‘iddat? The Qur’ān has answered this question by saying that a person can only twice exercise this right of divorcing his wife in the ‘iddat and then revoking the decision in his marriage with a lady. The words used are: الطَّلاقُ مَرْتَكَانٌ فَإِنْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيعٍ يَا حَسَانٌ (this divorce may be pronounced twice, and then a woman must be retained with kindness or allowed to go with kindness). That is if a person divorces his wife and revokes his decision within the ‘iddat, then he can exercise this right one more time in his life in his marriage. However, once he has used this authority twice, he can no longer use it again the third time. In such a situation, his wife would be permanently separated from him except if she marries some other person and he then also divorces her:

فَإِنْ طَلَقَهَا فَلَا تَحِلُّ لَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ حَتَّىٰ تَنكِحَ زَوْجًا غَيْرَهُ فَإِنْ طَلَقَهَا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يَتَرَاجِعَا إِنْ ظَنَّا أَنْ يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ وَتَلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ يُبَيِّنُهَا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٣٠)

Then if a husband divorces his wife [for the third time], he cannot marry her until she has wedded another man. Then if this [second husband] also divorces her, it shall be no offence for either of them to return to each other, if they think that they can now keep within the limits set by Allah. And such are the bounds of Allah. He makes them clear to men who want to gain knowledge. (2:230)

In case the same husband and wife want to remarry one another, the above quoted verse of the Qur’ān has imposed three restrictions on them:

Firstly, the wife should formalize her *nikāh* (marriage contract) with someone else.

Secondly, the second husband divorces her because for some reason the marriage cannot be pulled along.

Thirdly, the two think that after re-marriage the two would be able to remain within the bounds set by the Almighty.

In the first and second conditions, the word “*nikāh*” only implies the legal marital knot and the word “divorce” implies the divorce that one gives one’s wife when it is no longer possible to keep the marriage intact. Imām Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī writes:

The real thing is that *nikāh* is a known term referring to a marriage contract which takes place between a man and a woman with the intention of living together forever in the bond of matrimony. If this intention does not exist in a *nikāh*, then in reality it is not a *nikāh*; it is more of a plot conspired by a man and a woman. The option of divorce in marriage, upheld by the *sharī‘ah*, is not part of the original scheme; it is only a last resort to deal with insolvable situations. Consequently, the true nature of a *nikāh* is that it should be solemnized with the intention of living together as husband and wife permanently. If a person honours a *nikāh* only for a certain fixed period, then this is called *mut‘ah*, and it is totally prohibited in Islam. Similarly, if a person

solemnizes a *nikāh* with a lady and then divorces her just to provide her with a legal excuse to marry the first husband, then in religious parlance this is called *halālah* and, like *mu'tah*, it is also totally prohibited in Islam. A person who does such a despicable thing is like a pimp or pander or as a Ḥadīth says that such a person plays the role of “a rented out bull for breeding” and a person who does this and he who has it done are cursed by the Almighty.”⁵⁶

The third condition has been imposed in order to make divorce a very serious affair so that people do not carelessly indulge in it. They should only divorce their wives while remaining fearful of the Almighty and when they think that there is no possibility of keeping the marriage intact. Similarly, when they embark upon marrying someone, they should do so with sincerity of purpose and with the intention of creating a harmonious relationship. It is not befitting for a believer to adopt an attitude contrary to this.

Our jurists add to the above mentioned three conditions and say that a lady can only be divorced from this second husband once the two have had sexual intercourse. Without this, she is not legally allowed to become the wife of her first husband. They generally present the following three reasons in support of their view:

Firstly, the verb شَكَحَ (she marries) has been used by the Qur'ān. In this verb, the act of marriage has been attributed to the lady. However, since a lady does not contract marriage, rather a man does, so, شَكَحَ here necessarily imply sexual intercourse.

Secondly, the word زُوْجًا عِيْرَةً (another husband) are used after شَكَحَ. The word زُوْجًا is clearly pointing to the fact that the marriage has already been taken place; hence, it is imperative that شَكَحَ here necessarily imply sexual intercourse.

Thirdly, it has been reported that once the Prophet (sws) stopped a lady from marrying her first husband by saying that she is not legally allowed to marry him until she has had sexual intercourse with the first.

The answer to the first and the second of these arguments is clearly given by the Qur'ān:

وَإِذَا طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَا يَعْتَدُلُوهُنَّ أَنْ يَنكِحْنَ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ (٢:٢٣٢)

And when you have divorced your wives and they have reached the end of their waiting period, do not prevent them from marrying their future husbands. (2:232)

It is evident from this verse that the act of marriage has been attributed to the lady and the word زُوْجًا عِيْرَةً are used in the same sense as أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ, but it is obvious that the words أَنْ يَنكِحْنَ refer to the marital knot and cannot in any way be construed for sexual intercourse.

Moreover, it is quite strange to contend that the act of marriage cannot be

56. Ibid., vol. 1, 537.

attributed to the lady. One might dare ask that if this is not possible, then can sexual intercourse be attributed to her. Viewed on similar grounds, it is a man who in fact does it and not a woman.

As far as the third argument is concerned, it has arisen because of not understanding a Ḥadīth. The way Imam al-Bukhārī has narrated it in his *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* clearly shows that the lady had gotten married only to become legally permissible for the first husband. Consequently, when she lied by saying that her husband was unable to establish marital contact with her, the Prophet (sws) scolded her and told her that she could now only go back to her first husband after tasting her second husband. This of course is not a condition that he imposed; it is the case of stating an impossibility: the implied meaning being that if according to her, her second husband does not have the ability to copulate with her, then she can only be divorced from him after he copulates with her – which of course he will never since, according to her, he is not capable of it. Thus if anything can be adduced from this Ḥadīth, it is prohibition of *halālah*. It does not in anyway support the view of the jurists.

The text of the Ḥadīth is as follows:

عَنْ عِكْرِمَةَ أَنَّ رِفَاةَ طَلَقَ امْرَأَةً فَتَزَوَّجَهَا عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ الزَّبِيرِ الْقُرَظِيُّ قَالَتْ عَائِشَةُ وَعَلَيْهَا
خَمَارٌ أَخْضُرٌ فَشَكَتْ إِلَيْهَا وَأَرْسَهَا خُضْرَةً بِجَلْدِهَا فَلَمَّا حَاءَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
وَالنِّسَاءُ يَنْصُرُ بَعْضُهُنَّ بَعْضًا قَالَتْ عَائِشَةُ مَا رَأَيْتُ مِثْلَ مَا يَقُولُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ لَجَلْدِهَا أَشَدُ خُضْرَةً
مِنْ ثُوبِهَا قَالَ وَسَمِعَ أَنَّهَا قَدْ أَتَتْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَجَاءَهُ وَمَعَهُ ابْنَانِهِ مِنْ غَيْرِهَا
قَالَتْ وَاللَّهِ مَا لِي إِلَيْهِ مِنْ ذَنْبٍ إِلَّا أَنَّ مَا مَعَهُ لَيْسَ بِأَغْنِيَ عَنِي مِنْ هَذِهِ وَأَخْدَتْ هُذِبَةً مِنْ ثُوبِهَا
فَقَالَ كَذَبَتْ وَاللَّهِ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي لَا نَفْضُهَا نَفْضَ الْأَدَمِ وَلَكِنَّهَا نَاشِرٌ تُرِيدُ رِفَاةَ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ
اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَإِنْ كَانَ ذَلِكَ لَمْ تَحْلِي لَهُ أَوْ لَمْ تَصْلُحِي لَهُ حَتَّى يَدُوقَ مِنْ عُسْيَلَتِكَ
قَالَ وَأَبْصَرَ مَعَهُ ابْنَيْنِ لَهُ فَقَالَ بُنُوكَ هُؤُلَاءِ قَالَ نَعَمْ قَالَ هَذَا الَّذِي تَزْعُمِينَ مَا تَزْعُمِينَ فَوَاللَّهِ لَهُمْ
أَشْبَهُ بِهِ مِنْ الْعَرَابِ بِالْعَرَابِ

‘Ikramah narrates that Rafā‘ah divorced his wife. Thereafter she married ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn al-Zubayr al-Quraṣī. ‘Ā’ishah says that she came to her wearing a green cloak and complained of her husband and showed her, her bruises – women do help one another – so when the Prophet (sws) came by, ‘Ā’ishah said: “I have only seen Muslim women being treated in such a way. Her skin is greener than her cloak.” ‘Ikramah says that when her husband came to know that she had complained to the Prophet (sws), he also came over to the Prophet (sws) along with his two sons from his other wife. Upon seeing her husband, she got hold of the end of her cloak letting it hang from her hand and remarked: “My only complaint is that whatever he has is no more than this [soft cloth].” At this, ‘Abd al-Rahmān said: “O Prophet (sws) of Allah! She has told a lie. I am very strong and can satisfy her; the truth of the matter is that she is

disobedient and wants to go back to Rafā‘ah.” When the Prophet (sws) heard this, he said: “If this is the case, then you shall not be permissible for Rafā‘ah unless ‘Abd al-Rahmān tastes you.” Then, upon seeing the sons of ‘Abd al-Rahmān, the Prophet (sws) remarked: “Are these your sons?” When he replied in the affirmative, the Prophet said: “Do you tell such lies [O ‘Abd al-Rahmān’s wife]. By God! These [young boys] resemble ‘Abd al-Rahmān more than a crow resembles another crow.”⁵⁷

5. Whether the husband decides to divorce his wife or to take her back, in both cases the Qur’ān directs him to call in two Muslim witnesses on his decision. The witnesses are directed to remain steadfast on the evidence they give. The reason for this directive is to ensure that either of the parties is not able to refute a decision made and to resolve any other dispute that may arise in this regard. Moreover, this would make the matter very transparent for the people and settle doubts and confusions that may surface.

The above paragraphs explain the correct way of divorce. If a person divorces his wife according to this prescribed way or takes her back during the *iddat* period, then his decisions shall stand legally implemented. However, if divorce is given in violation of the prescribed way, then this is a legal case that would require a court ruling. Two similar cases of importance which came before the Prophet (sws) are as follows:

The first of these is the case of ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar (rta). When he divorced his wife during her menstrual cycle, ‘Umar (rta) presented his case before the Prophet (sws). The Prophet (sws) expressed great anger when he was informed of these details and said: “Ask him to take her back and retain her in wedlock until she enters her period of purity and then again passes through her menstrual cycle and is pure again. Then, if he wants, he can permanently retain her or divorce her without having intercourse with her because this is the beginning of *iddat* keeping regard of which the Almighty has directed a husband to divorce his wife.”⁵⁸

The second case is that of Rukānah ibn ‘Abdi Yazīd. By gathering all the narratives of this case, the whole situation that comes to light is that he had divorced his wife three times in one go. He then felt ashamed and presented his case before the Prophet (sws). The Prophet (sws) inquired: “How did you divorce her?” He replied: “I divorced her three times in one go.” The Prophet (sws) again inquired: “What was your intention?” He answered that he wanted to divorce her once only. The Prophet (sws) told him to reply on oath which he did and then said: “If this is the matter, then take her back. Only one divorce has been implemented.” Rukānah remarked: “O Prophet of Allah! I had divorced her three times.” The Prophet said: “I know, take her back and this is not the proper way of divorcing a wife. The Almighty has said that if one must divorce his wife, he

57. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1027, (no. 5825).

58. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 938, (no. 5251); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 628, (no. 3657).

should do so keeping in consideration the ‘iddat.’⁵⁹

The foundations on which the decisions of the Prophet (sws) are based in both the above quoted cases are:

i. If divorce is not given according to the prescribed procedure but there is a possibility to make amends for the violation, then the sanctity of the law demands that amends be made.

ii. A person has the right to explain his statements. If he says that a particular statement was uttered by him without any intention or with full intention, his explanation can be accepted.

iii. If a person says that he has divorced his wife three times, then this can mean that he has in fact divorced her three times and this can also be a statement that portrays the severity and intensity of his decision. Since both these possibilities exist when these words are said, hence any explanation of the speaker regarding the meaning in which he used them should also be acceptable.

However, this does not mean that if there exists evidence contrary to the explanation made, then such an explanation be accepted. A court has full authority to reject such an explanation if it is not satisfied. Consequently, when ‘Umar (rta) observed that people were no longer careful in uttering the divorce sentence he declared that he would not even accept a statement of explanation from the husband and three divorces pronounced would be counted as three.⁶⁰

iv. The Directive of ‘Iddat

Sūrah Ṭalāq says that divorce should be given keeping in view the ‘iddat. At another place, the Qur’ān has explained that the period of ‘iddat is three menstrual cycles:

وَالْمُطْلَقَاتُ يَرْبَضْنَ بِأَنفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةٌ قُرُونٌ (٢٢٨:٢)

And divorced women must keep themselves waiting for three menstrual cycles. (2:228)

In this verse, the Arabic word قُرُونٌ is the plural of قَرْءٌ. In Arabic, this word means both the “menstrual period” and the “non-menstrual period of purity”. While presenting his research on this word, Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī writes:

... after much deliberation on the root of the word and its derived forms, I have come to the conclusion that its real meaning is that of “menstruation”. However, since every menstrual period is followed by a period of purity (طهہ), the word is also used in this meaning. This is similar to the usage of the word

59. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 267, 270, (nos. 2196, 2206); Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 521, (no. 2051); Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr*, vol. 2, 466, (no. 1177), Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 1, 438, (no. 2383). These narratives have weak chains of narration; however, if they are collected and collated, this weakness is dispelled

60. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīl*, 630, (no. 3673).

“day” for “night” and vice versa. Every language has such words.⁶¹

The word قُرْبَةُ in the opinion of this writer as well means “menstruation” because in these verses the real issue is to ascertain whether a lady is pregnant or not. It is the “period of menstruation” which actually ascertains this and not the “period of purity”. Moreover, women are asked to wait in this period and this waiting period can only be ascertained through the menstrual cycle because its beginning can be known with certainty.

In normal circumstances, the ‘iddat is three menstrual cycles; however, if a woman does not menstruate because of advancing age or in spite of reaching puberty,⁶² then the Qur’ān has specified in Sūrah Ṭalāq that this period would be three months. It has also been stated that the ‘iddat of a pregnant lady extends to childbirth. In Sūrah Ṭalāq, for women who do not menstruate because of old age, there also exists the condition of إِنْ أَرْتَبْتُمْ (if you are doubtful). While explaining this condition, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

... it seems to me that the condition of إِنْ أَرْتَبْتُمْ (if you are doubtful) is to differentiate between a lady who does not menstruate because of age but has had sexual intercourse with her husband and a lady in similar state but who did not have sexual intercourse with her husband. For if a lady who does not menstruate because of age has had sexual intercourse with the husband there might be a chance of pregnancy if her state was temporary for some reason. A similar situation may arise for a lady who has not menstruated in spite of reaching the age and she has sexual intercourse with her husband ... It is possible that the question may arise in the mind of a person that if this was the case, then why did the Qur’ān not explicitly state that the ‘iddat of a lady who does not menstruate because of age and who has had sexual intercourse is three months. The answer to this question is that such a statement of the Qur’ān would not have pointed to the underlying reason of ‘iddat – which was essential to be highlighted. This underlying reason is not merely the fact that whether a lady has had sexual intercourse or not: it is the possibility that she may be pregnant.⁶³

It also follows from this that since the question of pregnancy does not even arise when a wife has not begun conjugal contact with her husband, hence there should be no ‘iddat for her. In Sūrah Ahzāb, the Almighty has specifically mentioned this fact:

61. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 1, 532.

62. The Qur’ānic words are وَاللَّائِي لَمْ يَحْضُنْ. In the Arabic language, the word لم is used for total and strong negation. Hence the expression cannot connote those girls who have not started to menstruate; it can only connote girls who have not menstruated in spite of reaching the age.

63. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 8, 442.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نَكْحَثُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ طَلَقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَمْسُوْهُنَّ فَمَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ عَدَّةٍ تَعْنِدُونَهَا (٤٩:٣٣)

Believers! When you marry Muslim women, and then divorce them before you have touched them, no period of ‘iddat’ have they for you which you can ask them to complete. (33:49)

The directives of ‘iddat’ which are mentioned in the relevant verses of Sūrah Talāq are as follows:

Firstly, during ‘iddat’ neither should a wife leave her house nor is the husband authorized to turn her out from her house. Living together in this way might hopefully be beneficial for both and they might reconcile and thus save a family from breaking. The Qur’ānic words (لَعْلَ اللَّهُ يُخْبِثُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ أَمْرًا) (you know not that God might thereafter create new circumstances) point to this very aspect. Further, a warning is sounded that the directives mentioned are the bounds set by Allah and any one who tries to exceed them would not harm Allah in any way; on the contrary, he would only harm his own well-being. It is not that the Almighty has set these bounds for His own benefit. It is for the welfare of His creation that He has set them forth; so any one who violates them only wrongs his own soul.

The only exception to the above directive is if the basis on which a divorce has been given is open lewdness which the Qur’ān has termed as فاحشة مُبَيِّنة. In the Arabic language, this expression implies fornication and other lesser forms of sexual contact. Obviously, in such a situation neither is it proper to demand from the husband to keep the wife in the house nor can the benefit be attained for which this directive had been given.

Secondly, it is stated that a husband should provide residence and maintenance to his divorced wife according to his status. After divorce, a husband can be very stingy in this regard. Consequently, he has been directed not to provide for her in a manner that damages her self-esteem. He should provide according to his resources and the social status he is maintaining. It is further stated that in this period a husband should in no way try to make life difficult for his wife so that she is soon forced to leave her house herself.

It is obvious that after the pronouncement of the third divorce also, a husband shall be responsible to provide residence and maintenance to the divorced wife. The reason is that a lady accepts to remain in ‘iddat’ only to ascertain whether she is the mother of his child or not. It is to protect his lineage that she undertakes this wait. The words (فَمَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ عَدَّةٍ) (then no period of ‘iddat’ have they for you which you can ask them to complete) of the above quoted verse of Sūrah Ahzāb clearly point to the fact that if pregnancy is a possibility then observing the ‘iddat’ is an obligation imposed on the wife from the husband. Indeed, after the third divorce, a husband does not have any right to revoke his decision and take back his wife; however, as a result of this, the only thing that can be revoked is their living together. In no way can the responsibility to provide her with residence and maintenance be revoked. Consequently, this is absolutely certain

that whether 'iddat is three menstrual cycles, three months or extends to the birth of the child, a husband is liable to provide her wife with residence as well as maintenance.

Here some people may object to the above view of this writer by presenting the case of Fātimah bint Qays. It is narrated that her husband Abū 'Amr had already divorced her twice. Then when he was sent to Yemen with 'Alī (rta), he sent her the third divorce pronouncement as well. During her 'iddat, when she demanded residence and maintenance, the relatives of the husband refused this demand. At this, she came to the Prophet (sws), who decided that she has neither the right to be given residence nor any maintenance.⁶⁴

The above referred to narrative is quoted in some books of Ḥadīth, but it is evident from certain other narratives that when her case was presented before the caliph 'Umar (rta), he too refused her demand by saying that he could not accept the verdict of a lady which is against the Book of God and the Sunnah of his Prophet (sws).⁶⁵ When in the time of Marwān ibn Ḥakam, this case once again came into discussion, 'Ā'ishah (rta) severely criticized this narrative. Qāsim ibn Muḥammad inquired from 'Ā'ishah (rta): "Are you not aware of the case of Fātimah bint Qays." She replied: "It is better if you do not mention her matter."⁶⁶ In another narrative, 'Ā'ishah's words are: "What has happened to Fātimah; does she not fear God."⁶⁷ A third narrative is from 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr. He says that 'Ā'ishah said: Nothing will benefit Fātimah if she narrates this Ḥadīth.⁶⁸ In still another narrative, 'Urwah says that 'Ā'ishah expressed her anger for Fātimah and said: "She was in an empty house where none whom she knew lived and hence the Prophet (sws), for her own protection, had directed her to change her residence."⁶⁹

This is the real background of the narrative; hence, no one should consider it worthy of any importance.

Besides the above mentioned directives, the Almighty has given a further directive in Sūrah Baqarah that no lady should try to conceal her pregnancy during her 'iddat. It has been indicated a number of times earlier that the very directive to observe the 'iddat has been given for ascertaining whether a lady is pregnant or not. Consequently, it is an essential outcome of this directive and the Almighty has forcefully directed us to observe it:

وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةُ قُرُوءٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكُنْمَنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ (٢٢٨:٢)

64. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 639, (nos. 3697, 3698); Abū Dā’ud, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 296, (no. 2290).

65. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 642, (no. 3710).

66. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 951, (nos. 5321, 5322).

67. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 951, (nos. 5323, 5324); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 643, (no. 3719).

68. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 952, (nos. 5325, 5326).

69. Ibid., 952, (nos. 5325, 5326).

And divorced women must keep themselves waiting for three menstrual courses. And it is unlawful for them, if they believe in Allah and the Last Day to hide what He has created in their wombs. (2:228)

v. After Divorce

Once a divorce is materialized, one issue that can become a source of dispute is suckling of young children. In the under discussion verses of Sūrah Tālāq, the Almighty has said that if their mother is willing to suckle them, then the husband shall pay her for this service and this remuneration shall be ascertained through mutual consultation and in a befitting manner. If such an agreement is not reached between the parents, then according to the Qur'ān any woman can be asked to suckle the children. It is also told that a rich person should spend according to his means and resources and a poor one according to his. Neither is it permitted for the rich person to deal with others in a manner that is below his status nor should a poor person be burdened beyond his means. The Almighty holds a person responsible to obey His directives according to his capacity and status.

In Sūrah Baqarah, this directive has been mentioned in detail:

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أُولَاهُنَّ حَوَّيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُتَمَّ الرِّضَاةَ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ
وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ لَا تُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَا تُضَارَّ وَالدَّهُ يُوَلِّهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ يُوَلِّهِ وَعَلَى
الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فَصَالَا عَنْ تَرَاضِيهِمَا وَتَشَاءُرُ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ
تَسْتَرْضِعُوا أُولَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَمْتُمْ مَا آتَيْتُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا
تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٢٢٣:٢)

And [after divorce also] mothers shall suckle their offspring for two whole years for those who desire to complete the term. And the child's father [in such a case] shall have to bear the cost of their food and clothing according to the norms. No one should be burdened beyond his capacity. Neither shall the mother be treated unfairly because of her child, nor the father on account of his child – and his heir shall be accountable in the same way – But if they both decide on weaning by mutual consent and after due consultation, there is no blame on them. And if you decide to engage someone else to suckle your offspring, there is no blame on you, provided you pay [the mother] in accordance with the norms [of the society] what you promised. And fear Allah and know that Allah sees well what you do. (2:223)

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, while summarizing the directives of suckling that these verses mention, writes:

- i) It is the responsibility of a divorced lady to suckle her offspring for two full years in case the husband wants her to complete the total suckling period.

- ii) During this period, it is the responsibility of the father to provide his divorced wife with food and clothing, keeping in view the norms of the society. In other words, the status of the husband, the needs of the divorced wife and her own status shall be kept in consideration while providing her this maintenance.
- iii) Neither of the parties shall be burdened beyond their capacity. Neither the mother shall be harmed in any way by taking advantage of the fact that she is the mother of the child nor the father be unduly pressurized in any way on the pretext that he is the father of the child.
- iv) If the father of the child is dead, his heirs will be responsible for all the above mentioned rights and obligations.
- v) If through mutual consent and consultation, the estranged husband and wife decide to terminate the suckling period before two years, they can do so.
- vi) If the child's father or, in his absence, the heirs of the child want to suckle the child through some other lady instead of the mother, they are authorized to do so provided what has been agreed with the mother regarding her maintenance is fully honoured.⁷⁰

The second thing which can become a source of dispute is the husband's attitude of hindering further marriage of his former wife. This attitude whether in the form of open forbiddance on his part or in the form of covert and stealthy schemes has been strictly prohibited by the Almighty in Sūrah Baqarah. He has counselled people that once a lady has been divorced, her former husband has no right to cause hindrance in any decision she makes. She has the liberty to marry whoever and whenever she wants. If her decision to marry is in accordance with the norms of the society, it cannot be objected to in any way. The Qur'ān uses the word المُعْرُوف to convey this meaning. This word implies that though a man and a woman are totally free to take their decision, they must remember not to do anything that is against the norms of decency and which may damage the honour and repute of the former or future husband or of the family of the woman herself. The Qur'ān says:

وَإِذَا طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَا يَعْضُلُوهُنَّ أَنْ يَنكِحْنَ أَزْوَاجَهُنَّ إِذَا تَرَاضُوا بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْمُعْرُوفِ
ذَلِكَ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكُمْ أَرْكَيْ لَكُمْ وَأَطْهَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنَّمَا
لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٣٢:٢)

And when you have divorced your wives and they have reached the end of their waiting period, do not prevent them from marrying their future husbands if

70. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 545.

they have come to an agreement according to the norms [of decency]. These words of advice are given to every one of you who believes in Allah and the Last Day; this is more decent for you and more chaste. And [in reality] Allah knows, but you do not. (2:232)

While explaining the last part of the verse, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī writes:

These sound words of advice are being given to those who believe in Allah and the Last Day. In other words, those who have belief in Allah and the Last Day should follow what is being advised since this is the outcome of true belief. Such an attitude is more pure and seemly. If a lady is impeded in anyway to remarry, this may result in great evils in the family and society. It is from here that back doors to clandestine relations, fornication, hijack and escaping are opened, eventually bringing great disrepute to those whose false pride induces them to obstruct natural emotions through worthless customs. The words “And Allah knows, but you do not,” at the end imply that man’s knowledge and vision is very limited. He cannot fully grasp the ups and downs of life; therefore, he should follow what the Almighty is directing him to do.⁷¹

Besides the above mentioned two issues, a third matter that can cause dissension between the divorced couple is the custody of children. The *shari‘ah* has not given any directive in this regard because this matter can only be decided keeping in view the welfare of the children and the circumstances of the parents, which of course vary a lot. However, those in authority can obtain a lot of guidance in this regard from the various cases decided by the Prophet (sws). Following is an account of some of them.

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar (rta) narrates that a lady came to the Prophet (sws) and said: “For this son of mine, it is only my belly which was his abode, and my breasts which were his vessel and my lap which was his dwelling place. Now his father has divorced me and wants to take him away from me.” The Prophet replied: “You are more entitled to keep him until you marry again.”⁷²

Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrates that in his presence once a lady came to the Prophet. I heard her saying: “My husband wants to take away from me this child even though he has brought over water for me from the well of Abū ‘Anbah and given me a lot of benefit.” The Prophet replied: “Both of you can cast a lot on this.” [Upon hearing this], the husband said: “Who will quarrel with me regarding this son of mine.” The Prophet asserted: “O son! This is your father and this is your mother; grasp the hand of the one you want to hold.” The child grasped the mother’s hand and she took him away.⁷³

71. Ibid., vol. 1, 544.

72. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 292, (no. 2276); Al-Ḥākim, *Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 3, 1069, (no. 2830).

73. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 292, (no. 2277).

10. Directives relating to Widows

وَالَّذِينَ يُنْوَفُونَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذْرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا يَتَرَبَّصُنَّ بِأَنفُسِهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَعَشْرًا فَإِذَا بَأْعَنَّ أَحَاهُنَّ فَلَا
 جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنفُسِهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَعْمَلُونَ حَسِيرٌ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا عَرَضْتُمْ
 بِهِ مِنْ خَطْلَةِ النِّسَاءِ أَوْ أَكْتَشَمْ فِي أَنفُسِكُمْ عِلْمَ اللَّهِ أَنَّكُمْ سَتَذَكَّرُونَهُنَّ وَلَكِنَّ لَا يُؤَاعِدُوهُنَّ سِرًا إِلَّا أَنْ
 يَقُولُوا قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا وَلَا يَعْزِمُوْا عَقْدَةَ النِّكَاحِ حَتَّى يَلْعَغَ الْكِتَابُ أَجَلَهُ وَاعْلَمُوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي
 أَنفُسِكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوْهُ وَاعْلَمُوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ (٢: ٢٣٤-٢٣٥)

And those of you who die and leave widows behind, they should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten days. Then when they have fulfilled their term, there is no blame on you about what they do with themselves in accordance with the norms [of society]. And Allah is well acquainted with what you do. And there is also no blame on you if you tacitly send a marriage proposal to these women or hold it in your hearts. Allah knows that you would soon talk to them. [Do so] but do not make a secret promise. Of course you can say something in accordance with the norms [of the society]. And do not decide to marry till the law reaches its term. And know that Allah has knowledge of what is in your hearts; so be fearful of Him and know that Allah is Most forgiving and Most Forbearing. (2:234-235)

The above quoted verses of Sūrah Baqarah mention the directive of ‘iddat for widows.

The first thing mentioned is that the ‘iddat of a widow is four months and ten days.⁷⁴ In contrast to the ‘iddat of a divorced lady, the ‘iddat of a widow has been extended by forty days. The reason is that while a husband has been asked to divorce his wife in the period of purity in which he has had no sexual intercourse with her, obviously no such requirement can be proposed in the case of a widow. It is to exercise care that forty days have been added by the Qur’ān to the waiting period of a woman who loses her husband.

The second thing stated is that after the waiting period expires, the wife is free to do whatever she deems appropriate for herself. However, she should follow the norms of the society in this matter. In other words, she should not indulge in any activity which damages the repute, honour and integrity of the family nor the

74. Since the reason to observe the ‘iddat for a divorced lady and a widow is the same, all the exceptions that have been stated in the directive of divorce for a divorced lady shall also hold in case of the ‘iddat of a widow. Consequently, there shall be no ‘iddat for a widow with whom the deceased husband has had no intercourse. Similarly, the ‘iddat of a pregnant widow shall extend till childbirth. It is recorded by Al-Bukhārī and by Muslim that when a pregnant widow Sabī‘ah (rta) presented her case before the Prophet (sws), her case was decided on these very grounds. See: Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 951, (no. 5318); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 644, (no. 3723).

norms of a society. If all this is kept in consideration, then no blame can be cast on her or her guardians. Writes Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī:

What is implied is that one should not blame and censure one another without any reason by equating all un-Islamic customs with Islam. On the one hand, a situation should not develop where the guardians of the widow or the heirs of the deceased husband are censured due to the implication that they got tired of the wife [thus letting her leave] much before she could fully mourn the loss of her husband. On the other hand, circumstances should not deteriorate to where the widow herself is censured simply because she became interested in remarrying soon after her husband's death. In all cases, only the bounds of the Almighty should be observed and one should remember that the Almighty is aware of all the deeds of His creatures.⁷⁵

The third thing stated is that if a person wants to marry a widow, then it is according to the norms that he takes this decision in his mind during her ‘iddat or inform her of his intentions in a very tacit manner. However, it is not permitted that he, without considering the sentiments of the affected family, send a marriage proposal to the widow or make some hidden agreement with her. On such occasions, whatever is said must never exceed the bounds of sympathy and expression of condolences. Consequently, the verses forewarn a person that since it is definite that he would express his intention in such a situation, it should not be in the form of a marriage proposal or some hidden or open agreement. This intention should be expressed in a manner that is befitting to the situation and in accordance with the norms of the society. Of course, once the waiting period expires, a person can decide to marry such a lady. At that time, he cannot be blamed in any way.

It stems from this directive that the behaviour of the widow should also be befitting to the situation she finds herself in. On these very grounds, the Prophet (sws) directed such women to spend their ‘iddat in the house of their deceased husband in a state of mourning and to refrain from embellishing themselves. He is reported to have said:

الْمُتَوَفِّيْ عَنْهَا زَوْجُهَا لَا تَلْبِسُ الْمُعَصْفَرَ مِنَ الْتِيَابِ وَلَا الْمُمْشَقَةَ وَلَا الْحُلَيْ وَلَا تَخْتَضِبُ وَلَا تَكْتَحِلُ

A widow should not wear coloured clothes, neither golden nor red nor ochre. She should not adorn jewellery nor put on henna or stain her eyes with antimony.⁷⁶

Should such a wife be provided with residence and maintenance during this period? The Qur’ān has answered this question further down in the sūrah: husbands should make a will in favour of their wives for the provision of one year's residence and maintenance, except if the wives themselves leave the house

75. Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 1, 546.

76. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 301, (no. 2304).

or take any other similar step:⁷⁷

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّونَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا وَصَيْهَةً لَا زَوَاجٍ هُمْ مَتَاعًا إِلَى الْحَوْلِ غَيْرَ إِخْرَاجٍ فَإِنْ خَرَجْنَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي مَا فَعَلْنَ فِي أَنفُسِهِنَّ مِنْ مَعْرُوفٍ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (٢٤٠:٢)

And those of you who die and leave widows should bequeath for their widows a year's provision and [bequeath] that [in this period] they shall not be turned out of their residences; but if they themselves leave the residence, there is no blame on you for what they do with themselves according to the norms of society. And Allah is exalted in Power, Wise. (2:240)

11. Norms of Gender Interaction

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ سَتَأْسِفُوا وَسُلِّمُوا عَلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَجِدُوا فِيهَا أَحَدًا فَلَا تَدْخُلُوهَا حَتَّىٰ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ قِيلَ لَكُمْ ارْجِعُوا فَارْجِعُوا هُوَ أَزْكَى لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلَيْمٌ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ مَسْكُونَةٍ فِيهَا مَتَاعٌ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبَدِّلُونَ وَمَا تَكُونُونَ قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَعْضُوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَعْضُضُنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبَدِّلِنَ زِينَتِهِنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلَيُضْرِبَنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُبُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبَدِّلِنَ زِينَتِهِنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءَ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءَ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْرَوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْرَوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْرَوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخْرَوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَانِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوْ التَّابِعَيْنَ غَيْرُ أُولَئِي الْإِلَارِبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الْطَّفَلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهِرُوا عَلَىٰ عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبَنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعَلَّمَ مَا يُخْفِيْنَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (٣١-٢٧:٢٤)

Believers! Enter not the houses other than your own until you have introduced yourselves and wished peace to those in them. That is best for you that you may be heedful. Then if you find no one in the house, enter not until permission is given to you and if you are asked to go back, go back, for it is purer for you. And Allah has knowledge of all which you do. It is no sin for

77. Most commentators consider the directive stated in this verse to be abrogated from the verses of inheritance that Sūrah Nisā mentions. This, I am afraid, is not the case. The verse has not been abrogated by any other Qur'ānic verse. Quite obviously, it is an extension of another Qur'ānic directive: the directive given to the husband to provide for and give shelter to his wife in his lifetime. It is for the husband that she accepts the restriction of the 'iddat period. Hence she should necessarily be given more time to decide for her future. This is the wisdom behind the directive and bears no relation to the directive of distribution of inheritance.

you to enter non-residential places in which there is benefit for you. And Allah has knowledge of what you reveal and what you conceal. [O Prophet!] Tell believing men to restrain their eyes and guard their private parts [if there are women present in these houses]. That is purer for them. And indeed Allah is well aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to restrain their eyes and to guard their private parts and to display of their ornaments only those which are normally revealed and to draw their coverings over their bosoms. And they should not reveal their embellishments to anyone save their husbands or their fathers or their husbands' fathers or their sons or their husbands' sons or their brothers or their brothers' sons or their sisters' sons or other women of acquaintance or their slaves or the subservient male servants who are not attracted to women or children who have no awareness of the hidden aspects of women. And they should [also] not stamp their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. Believers! Turn to Allah in repentance that you may prosper. (24:27-31)

In order to protect the society from moral misconduct and to safeguard the sanctity of personal relationships, the above quoted verses outline the norms and etiquette of gender interaction. They are stated in Sūrah Nūr with the warning that these norms of social interaction and communal contact must be adhered to in order to maintain the purity of heart and are the most appropriate set of principles in this matter. If people follow these norms, they will obtain the great blessings and favours they entail. However, to obtain these, it is essential that they follow these norms while regarding the Almighty to be all embracing in knowledge and always remain aware of the fact that the Almighty is not only aware of their deeds but also the intentions and motives behind them.

These norms are:

1. If friends, relatives or acquaintances visit one another, they should follow a certain decorum. Suddenly barging into a house without introducing one's self is improper. On such occasions, the visitor should first of all properly introduce himself by paying salutations to the residents of the house. This will make the residents aware of the visitor, provide them with the opportunity to determine the purpose of his visit and whether it is appropriate for them to let him in. If the visitor hears a reply to his salutations and is given permission, only then should he enter. If there is no one present in the house to give him permission or if someone is present and the visitor is told on his behalf that meeting him is not possible, he should retreat without any feelings of ill-will.

In this regard, while explaining this directive, the Prophet (sws) has directed the visitor to seek permission three times and if he hears no reply even after his third call, he should turn back.⁷⁸

Similarly, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that the permission to enter must not be sought by standing right at the front door of the house and while

78. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 1087, (no. 6245); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 959-960, (no. 5633).

peeping in because the very reason for seeking permission is that the visitor should not catch a glimpse of the residents.⁷⁹

2. In case the visited place is non-residential, no formal permission is required. The Qur'ān uses the words يُبَوِّنَا عَيْنَ مَسْكُونَةٍ for such places. They include hotels, rest-houses, guest-houses, shops, offices and meeting places. A person can enter such places because of some need without seeking permission as per the dictates of this verse.

3. In both types of visited places, if women are present then the divine directive is that both the men and women present should restrain their gazes. The words used for this directive are يَعْضُوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ. If there is modesty in the gazes, and men and women refrain from feasting their eyes on the physical attributes of one another and ogling each other, then no doubt the purport of the directive stands fulfilled. The expression غَضْ بَصَرْ does not mean that men and women should not look at each other or have to constantly stare at the floor while interacting with one another. It means to guard one's gaze from taking undue liberty and to refrain from staring at one another. If this vigil on the eyes is not kept, then in the words of the Prophet (sws), this would be tantamount to adultery of the eyes. Once a person indulges in it, his sexual organ either fulfils the ultimate objective of what his eyes initiated or is unable to do so.⁸⁰ It is regarding this first accidental gaze about which the Prophet (sws) has directed the believers to turn it away.

Jarīr ibn 'Abdullāh reports that he asked from the Prophet (sws): "What if such a glance takes place suddenly?" The Prophet (sws) replied: "Immediately turn it away or lower it."⁸¹

Once during the Prophet's farewell pilgrimage when a lady from the Khath'am tribe stopped the Prophet (sws) on his way, Fadl ibn 'Abbās started to stare at her. When the Prophet (sws) saw him, he caught hold of his face and turned it to the other side.⁸²

4. One must properly guard one's sexual organs on such occasions of interaction. The implication is that they should have neither have any inclination for others nor should they be revealed to others; in fact, on occasions of gender intermingling, body parts which need to be covered must be covered even more carefully. The primary way to achieve this end is to wear decent clothes. Men and women should wear such clothes which not only hide their embellishments but also the sexual organs. Moreover, on such occasions, care should be taken that a person does not expose his sexual organs. This is the very objective guarding the sexual organs. The Qur'ān wants that believing men and women

79. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1086, (no. 6241); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 564-565, (no. 3260).

80. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1087, (no. 6243); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1157, (no. 6754).

81. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 961, (no. 5644).

82. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 299, (no. 1855); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 563, (no. 3251).

besides restraining their eyes also observe this norm of modesty.

5. It is necessary for women in particular not to display any of their embellishments except before their close relatives, attendants and people of acquaintance. However, exempted from this are embellishments adorned on limbs which are generally never covered: ie. the jewellery and make-up worn on the hand, the face and the feet. In the opinion of this writer, the correct meaning of the Qur'ānic words إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا used to indicate this meaning is the one pointed out by al-Zamakhsharī in the words:

إِلَّا مَا جَرَتِ الْعَادَةُ وَالْجِبَلَةُ عَلَى ظُهُورِهِ وَالْأَصْلُ فِيهِ الظُّهُورُ

Except limbs which a person does not cover generally and instinctively and they are always left bare.⁸³

Therefore, barring the embellishments worn on these places, women must hide the ones worn in all other places. So much so, in the presence of men, they should not walk by striking their feet in a manner which draws attention to any hidden embellishments they may be wearing. On these very grounds, the Prophet (sws) bade women not to use strong perfumes when they go out.⁸⁴

Relatives and people of acquaintance before which the above mentioned display of ornaments is not forbidden are:

- i. Husband
- ii. Father
- iii. Father-in-law
- iv. Sons
- v. Sons of the Husband
- vi. Brothers
- vii. Brothers' Sons
- viii. Sisters' Sons

The word “son” implies the grand and great grand sons, both maternal and paternal ones without any discrimination of real or step relations. The same implies for the sons of brothers and sisters. In these relations also, the sons of real, step and foster brothers and sisters are understood to be included.

- ix. Women of acquaintance and Maids

It is evident from these words that unknown women should be treated the same way as men and a Muslim lady should be very careful in displaying her concealed embellishments before them. The reason is that at times a woman can

83. Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 3, 231.

84. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 77, (no. 4173).

have sexual leanings towards her own gender. Similarly, at times, being influenced by the physical features and attributes of other women, they become a means of inclining men towards these women and vice versa too.

x. Slaves

The institution of slavery existed in Arabia in the times of the Prophet Muhammad (sws). The words used in the above quoted verse while referring to this institution are مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ مَا. Some jurists have understood this expression to only mean “slave-women”. However, there is no reason for this exception. Writes Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī:

Had only slave-women been implied by this expression, then the appropriate words would have been اُوْ اَمَاءِهِنَّ. A common expression that connotes both slave-men and slave-women would never have been used. Moreover, the verses already mention the category which as, has been explained, includes both women with whom one is generally acquainted as well as slave-women and maidservants. After a mention of this category, an independent mention of slave-women is needless.⁸⁵

xi. People who live in a house as dependents and because of their subservience or owing to any other reason are incapable of feeling any attraction towards women.

xii. Children who are as yet unaware of sexual matters.

6. Since the chest of women is a means of sexual attraction, and also there may be jewellery worn around the neck, they are further directed to cover their chests with a cloak on such occasions. In this way, the neckline shall also be covered as much as possible. If by some other means than the cloak this purpose is achieved, then this cannot be objected to either. The real objective is that women must not reveal their chest and neckline before men; on the contrary, these should be concealed in a manner that neither do they nor any embellishments worn on them become prominent in any way.

The *sūrah* also mentions certain other clarifications regarding these norms.

Firstly, slave-men and women and sexually immature children who generally frequent a house are not required to take permission every time they enter private rooms. They are just required to seek permission in three specific times of the day: before the *fajr* prayer when the residents are generally in bed, during the nap in the afternoon when they may not be wearing proper clothes and after the *'ishā'* prayer when they go off to bed for sleep. These three periods of time require privacy. If someone suddenly enters a private room in these times, he may see the residents in an inappropriate state. Barring these three times of the day, sexually immature children and slave-men and women can enter the private rooms and other areas of the house without taking any permission. This then cannot be objected to. However, in the above mentioned three times, they must seek permission when

85. Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 5, 398.

they want to enter a private room. Also, children, once they reach sexual maturity, must seek permission at all times. The fact that they have been frequenting the house ever since their childhood is not reason enough for them to continue with the exception granted to them. Consequently, once they reach this age, they must follow the regulations that pertain to all:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِيَسْتَأْذِنُكُمُ الَّذِينَ مَلَكْتُ أَيْمَانَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْعُوا الْحُلُمَ مِنْكُمْ ثَلَاثَ مَرَاتٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِ صَلَةِ الْفَجْرِ وَحِينَ تَضَعُونَ ثِيَابَكُمْ مِّنَ الظَّهِيرَةِ وَمَنْ بَعْدَ صَلَةِ الْعِشَاءِ ثَلَاثُ عُورَاتٍ لَّكُمْ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا عَلَيْهِمْ جُنَاحٌ بَعْدَهُنَّ طَوَّافُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ وَإِذَا بَلَغَ الْأَطْفَالُ مِنْكُمُ الْحُلُمَ فَلِيَسْتَأْذِنُوا كَمَا اسْتَأْذَنَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (٥٩-٥٨:٢٤)

Believers! Let your slave men and women and those who are under age ask your permission on three occasions when they come in to see you: before the *fajr* prayer, when you have put off your garments in the heat of noon and after the *'ishā* prayer. These three occasions are times of your privacy. At other times, it shall be no offence for you or them, [because you] go around visiting one another. Thus God explains to you His verses and God is All-knowing and Wise. And when your children reach the age of mental maturity, let them still ask your permission as their elders do. Thus God explains to you His verses and God is All-Knowing and Wise. (24:58-59)

Secondly, the directive of covering the chest and the neckline does not pertain to old women who are no longer of marriageable age on the condition that they their intention is not to display their ornaments. It is not necessary for a woman to cover her chest and neckline in the age in which she generally loses her sexual urge and in which a man feels no attraction for her. So, in the presence of men, old women can dispense with the cloth that covers the stipulated area. However, what is more pleasing in the sight of Allah is that even in this age they be careful and not dispense with this garment:

وَالْقَوَاعِدُ مِنَ السَّيِّدَاتِ الَّتِي لَا يَرْجُونَ نِكَاحًا فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِنَّ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ يَضْعُنَنِيَّا بِهِنَّ غَيْرُ مُتَبَرِّجَاتٍ بِزِينَةٍ وَأَنْ يَسْتَعْفِفْنَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُنَّ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ (٦٠:٢٤)

And it shall be no sin for aged women who have no hope of marriage to discard their cloaks on the condition that they do not display their embellishments. And if they exercise caution, it is better for them. And God hears all and knows all. (24:60)

Thirdly, it is explained in these verses that there is absolutely no harm if people and their relatives who are disabled or impaired in any manner come and visit one another and whether men and women among them eat together or separately

in their own houses, of their fathers' or grandfathers', mothers', brothers' and sisters', of their paternal uncles' and aunts', maternal uncles' and aunts', of people who are financially dependent on them and of their friends' houses. Indeed, when they enter such houses they must greet the residents in the prescribed way. The Muslim religious greeting (*al-salāmu 'alaykum*) is in fact a beautiful invocation to the Almighty to strengthen personal relationships. The norms of social interaction that are outlined in these verses are not meant to deprive people of mutual support or to curtail their social freedom. If people show prudence, they can maintain all these relationships even after following these norms. They must not think that these directives are meant to put them through difficulties. The Almighty does not intend to prohibit social interaction in any way:

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى أَنفُسِكُمْ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا
مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ آبائِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَمَهَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ إِخْرَانِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ
أَخْوَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَعْمَامِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ عَمَانِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ خَالاتِكُمْ أَوْ مَا مَكْتُمْ
مَفَاتِحَهُ أَوْ صَدِيقَكُمْ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا جَمِيعًا أَوْ أَشْتَانًا فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ بَيْوَنًا فَسَلِّمُوا عَلَى
أَنفُسِكُمْ تَحْيَةً مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُبَارَكَةً طَيِّبَةً كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (٦١:٢٤)

There is no harm if the blind, the lame, and the sick eat at your table nor if you eat in your own houses, your fathers' or grandfathers', your mothers', your brothers' and your sisters', your paternal uncles', your paternal aunts', your maternal uncles', your maternal aunts', or of those who are [financially] dependent on you or your friends'. There is no harm if men and women eat together or apart. [However, this much you should do that] when you enter a house, say "peace to you" – a blessed and noble invocation fixed by God. Thus God explains to you His revelations so that you may grow in wisdom. (24:61)

These are the norms of social interaction in general circumstances. However, in the age of the Prophet (sws) in Madīnah when some miscreants started teasing and besmirching the characters of Muslim women, the Almighty in Sūrah Ahzāb bade the wives of the Prophet (sws), his daughters and other Muslim women to draw over them any of the shawls they have when they go out to places which were insecure. Such dressing-up would distinguish them from women of lewd character and they would not be teased on the pretext of being outwardly similar to such women. It is reported in various narratives that when Muslim women in the dark of night or in the dim light of dawn would go out to relieve themselves, these miscreants would get after them and when they would be called to account, they would say that they actually wanted to talk to such and such a woman thinking that she was a slave-woman.⁸⁶ The Qur'ān says:

86. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Azīm*, vol. 3, 518; Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*,

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْذُنُونَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ بِغَيْرِ مَا اكْتَسَبُوا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلُوا بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُبِينًا يَأْيَهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأَرْزُوا جَنَاحَكَ وَبَنَاتَكَ وَنِسَاءَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُذْهِنُونَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَالِهِنَّ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى أَنْ يُعْرَفَ فَلَا يُؤْذَنُونَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا لَعِنْ لَمْ يَتَّهِ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ وَالْمُرْجَفُونَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ لَنُغَرِّيَنَّكَ بِهِمْ ثُمَّ لَا يُجَاهِرُونَكَ فِيهَا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مَلْعُونِينَ أَيَّسْنَا تُقْعِدُوا أَخْذُونَا وَقَاتِلُوا نَقْتَلُهَا (٦١-٥٨:٣٣)

And those who harass believing men and believing women for what they never did [should know that] they shall bear the guilt of slander and a grievous sin. O Prophet! [In this situation] enjoin your wives, your daughters, and the wives of true believers to draw over them a shawl [when they go out]. It will become possible from this that they be distinguished [from other women] and not be harassed. God is Ever-forgiving and Merciful. If [after these measures also] these hypocrites and those who have the ailment [of jealousy] in their hearts and the scandal mongers of Madīnah do not desist, We will rouse you against them, and their days in that city will be numbered. Cursed be they; wherever found, they would be seized and put to exemplary death. (33:58-61)

It is evident from the words أَنْ يُعْرَفَنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَنُونَ and their context that they do not contain any directive related to *hijāb*. It was a temporary measure adopted to distinguish the identity of Muslim women in order to protect them from the evil of lecherous people and from those who indulge in unfounded slander. Owing to similar reasons, the Prophet (sws) also forbade Muslim women from travelling alone on long journeys and from walking on pathways within a crowd of men.⁸⁷ Consequently, if today Muslim women are faced with similar circumstances, they should adopt a similar measure to make themselves distinct from other women and to protect themselves.

The *sūrah* also mentions certain directives that are specific to the Prophet Muhammad (sws) in his capacity of a Messenger of God. They bear no relation to other people; however, since certain scholars have extended their sphere of application to all Muslims, their explanation seems appropriate here.

A deliberation on the contents of the *sūrah* reveals the fact that when the hypocrites and miscreants mentioned above embarked upon a campaign to scandalize the private lives of the wives of the Prophet (sws) to make the common man averse to them and to damage the moral repute of both Islam and the Muslims, the Almighty took certain measures to curb this evil: First, He gave the noble wives the choice to leave the Prophet (sws) and live the life of common Muslim women enjoying its luxuries and comforts or to once again decide with full awareness to live forever as the wives of the Prophet (sws) in order to obtain the comforts and luxuries of the Hereafter. They were then informed that if they decided to stay with

vol. 3, 560.

87. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, vol. 4, 77, (no. 1086); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 564-565, (no. 3260); Abū Dā’ud, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 370, (no. 5272).

the Prophet (sws), then they must realize that their status as his wives entailed great responsibility. They are not like common women; they are like the mothers of the believers. Therefore, if they remain faithful to Allah and His Prophet (sws) and do righteous deeds with full sincerity, they will earn a two-fold reward. Likewise, they will be worthy of a two-fold punishment in relation to other women if they commit a sin. Their inner purification is beyond doubt; however, the Almighty also wants to morally cleanse them in the eyes of the people so that no one is given a chance to even cast slight aspersions on their characters. This is a requisite of their status and they must adopt certain things in their daily lives to achieve this purity.

Firstly, if they are fearful of the Almighty they should not be kind and affectionate in speech to every person who enters their house. Though in normal circumstances, one must be gentle and kind when he speaks to others, but, in the circumstances they are facing, such an attitude would only embolden the miscreants and the hypocrites around them to take undue advantage of them. Such an attitude of kindness would create in them the expectation of success in their mission – the mission of whispering evil in people's hearts. So if ever they have to talk to such people, they must speak in clear and simple tones so that those among their addressees who intend evil realize that they cannot achieve their objective. The Qur'ān says:

يَانِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَ كَاحِدٌ مِنِ النِّسَاءِ إِنْ أَعْيَشَنَ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْلَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ
وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا (٣٢:٣٣)

Wives of the Prophet! You are not like other women. [So], if you fear God, do not be too complaisant in your speech, lest the lecherous-hearted should lust after you. Talk [with such people] in plain and simple words. (33:32)

Second, they should remain in their homes in order to protect their rank and status. All their attitudes and mannerism should be in accordance with the status that the Almighty has conferred upon them. So if they have to go out to meet some compelling need, they must not go out displaying their ornaments and finery – something which was the way of women of the age of ignorance. Both their status and responsibility entail that they remain in their houses and diligently pray and pay *zakāh* as much as they can and with full sincerity spend their time in obedience to the Almighty and His Prophet (sws). However, if due to some unavoidable reason they must leave their place, then they should do so in the most befitting of manners exemplifying the culture and tradition of the Muslims and not let any Hypocrite raise any objection against them:

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرَّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى وَأَقْمِنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِنَ الزَّكَةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ
وَرَسُولَهُ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذَهِّبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا (٣٢:٣٣)

And abide still in your homes and do not display your finery as women used to do in the days of ignorance. Attend to your prayers, pay *zakāh* and obey

God and His Messenger. Women of this house! The Almighty wants to cleanse you from the filth [these hypocrites want to besmear you with] and to fully purify you. (33:33)

Thirdly, they should try to communicate the verses of the Qur'ān as well as the beliefs and moral teachings of Islam to people who come and visit them and refrain from other general gossip. It is for this very objective that the Almighty has chosen them. Their purpose of life now is the dissemination of the message of Islam and not indulgence in the luxuries of life:

وَإِذْ كُرِنَ مَا يُتَلَى فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا حَبِيرًا (٣٤:٣٢)

And communicate [to your visitors] what is taught to you of the verses of God and the wisdom revealed by Him. The Almighty is Very Discerning and All-Knowing. (33:34)

It seems that even after all these measures, the miscreants did not mend their ways. Consequently, the Almighty gave some more directives to Muslims which were to be strictly followed.

Muslims were told that no one should enter the house of the Prophet (sws) unless he was called. If people are invited to have food at the house of the Prophet (sws), they shall come right at the time of food. They shall then disperse immediately afterwards and not keep talking to one another.

The wives of the Prophet (sws) shall be secluded from the Muslims and except for near relatives and women of their acquaintance no one shall come in front of them. Any who wants something from their private places must ask for it from behind a veil.

The wives of the Prophet (sws) shall be the mothers of the believers. Those Hypocrites who have the desire to marry them should know that even after the death of the Prophet (sws) they cannot marry them. They are eternally prohibited for marriage after him. Consequently, every believer should honour and respect them the way he honours and respects his own mother. The Prophet (sws) is greatly distressed by the wrong attitudes of these miscreants. They must now be aware that bothering the Prophet (sws) is not something trivial. A person may fashion out an excuse for his misdemeanour in this world but he would not be successful in justifying it before the Lord of the worlds Who is aware of what is in the hearts:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى طَعَامٍ غَيْرَ نَاطِرِينَ إِنَّهُ وَلَكُنْ إِذَا دُعَيْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوا فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَاقْتَسِرُوا وَلَا مُسْتَأْنِسِنَ لِحَدِيثِ إِنْ ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذِي النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَحْيِي مِنْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ ذَلِكُمْ أَطْهَرُ لِقْلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْذِنُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَنْ تَنْكِحُوا أَزْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَبْدَأْ إِنْ

ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا إِنْ تُبْدُوا شَيْئًا أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلَيْمًا لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِنَّ فِي آبَائِهِنَّ وَلَا أَبْنَاءِ إِخْرَانِهِنَّ وَلَا أَبْنَاءَ أَخْوَاهُنَّ وَلَا نِسَاءَهُنَّ وَلَا مَا مَلَكُتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ وَأَتَقِنَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدًا (٣٣: ٥٣-٥٥)

Believers! Do not enter the houses of the Prophet except if you are permitted sometime to enter for a meal. In this case also, do not sit to waiting for the food to be cooked. But if you are invited, enter and when you have eaten, disperse. Do not engage in familiar talk, for this would distress the Prophet and he would feel shy to bid you go; but of the truth God does not feel shy. And if you ask his wives for anything, speak to them from behind a curtain. This is more pure for your hearts and their hearts. And you must not harass God's Messenger, nor shall you ever wed his wives after him; this would be a grave offence in the sight of God. Whether you reveal or conceal them, God has knowledge of all things. It shall be no offence for these women [- Prophet's wives -] to come before their fathers, their sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women of acquaintance, or their slaves. [O] Women [of the household of the Prophet!] Have fear of God; surely God observes all things. (33:53-55)

12. Directives relating to Parents

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَّاتَهُ أُمُّهُ وَهُنَّ عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفَصَالُهُ فِي عَامِينَ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ
الْمَصِيرُ وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ عَلَى أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطْعِهُمَا وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا
مَعْرُوفًا وَاتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ مَنْ أَنْتَ بِإِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنْبِئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٣١: ١٤-١٥)

And We enjoined man to show kindness to his parents – with much pain his mother bears him and he is not weaned before he is two years of age – [We said:] “Be grateful to Me and to your parents. To Me shall all things return. But if they press you to serve besides Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them. Remain kind to them in this world, and turn to Me with all devotion. To Me you shall all return, and I will declare to you everything you have done.” (31:14-15)

All divine scriptures instruct man to show kindness to the parents. Various verses of the Qur'ān also direct the believers to be well-behaved to the parents.⁸⁸ The above quoted verses however specifically determine the limits of good behaviour with the parents. The details of this directive as stated in these verses are:

1. It is the parents who bring into existence a new life and become the means to nourish it. No doubt, the care and affection of the father is quite a lot, however

88. See for example 17:23-24, 29:8 and 46:15.

the hardships a mother encounters in bringing up the child starting from her pregnancy, to childbirth and then breast-feeding the child are unmatched and no child can repay her for this great service. On these very grounds, the Prophet (sws) has regarded the right of the mother as three times that of the father.⁸⁹ Consequently, the Almighty exhorts man to be the most grateful to his parents after his Lord. This gratitude must not be expressed merely by the tongue. Its essential corollary is that it should manifest in good behaviour towards them. He should respect them and never become fed up of them. He must not utter a single word of disrespect to them. Instead, he should be soft, sympathetic, loving and obedient to them. He should listen to them and be caring and affectionate to them in the tenderness of old age. The Qur'ān says:

وَقَضَى رَبُّكَ أَلَا تَعْدِلُوا إِلَيْاهُ وَبِالْأَدِينِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَلْعَنَ عِنْدَكُوكَبِيرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كَلَاهُمَا فَلَا
تُقْتَلُ لَهُمَا أُفْ وَلَا شَنَهُرُهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا وَاحْفَضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ
أَرْحَمَهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَنِي صَغِيرًا رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ إِنْ تَكُونُوا صَالِحِينَ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لِلَّهِ وَآبَائِينَ
غَفُورًا (٢٣: ٢٥-٢٦)

And your Lord has enjoined you to worship none but Him, and to show great kindness to your parents, If either or both of them attain old age in your presence, show them no sign of impatience, nor rebuke them; but speak to them kind words. Treat them with humility and tenderness and say: "Lord, be merciful to them the way they nursed me when I was an infant." Your Lord best knows what is in your hearts. If you remain obedient, He will forgive those who turn to Him. (17:23-25)

2. In spite of the status that Islam confers upon parents, they do not have the right to force their children to baselessly associate someone with the Almighty. The Prophet (sws) has said that showing disobedience to parents is the greatest sin after polytheism;⁹⁰ however, the above quoted verses of Sūrah Luqmān say that the children should openly disobey their parents with regard to polytheism and should follow the way of those who follow God. Any calls to evade the Almighty must not receive any positive response even if it is the parents who are giving the call. On these very grounds, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said: لَطَاعَةُ فِي الْمُعْصِيَةِ إِنَّمَا الطَّاعَةُ فِي الْمَعْرُوفِ (no one can be obeyed if he calls to disobey the Almighty; one can only obey what is virtuous).⁹¹

Consequently, all other directives of the Almighty shall also be considered subservient to this directive, and one cannot disobey these directives if the

89. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1045, (no. 5971); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1117, (no. 6500).

90. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1046, (no. 5976); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 53, (no. 259).

91. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1229-1230, (no. 7145); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 826, (no. 4766).

parents ask them to do so.

3. Even if the parents force their children to commit a sin as heinous as polytheism, they must always be treated in a befitting manner. Their needs should be met as far as possible and a prayer of guidance be continued to be made for them. This is what the words (وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا) (remain kind to them in this world) of the verse quoted above entail. The children may have a right to disobey their parents if they insist upon disobedience to the directives of religion but they must still not be slack or indifferent in any way to their duty towards their parents.

The last part of the verses تُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُبَيِّنُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ caution a person that one day he has to return to the Almighty to give an account of his deeds. While commenting upon this part of the verse, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī writes:

This part of the verse addresses both the parents and the children and carries both a warning and an assurance. One day, each person will have to return to the Almighty. Whatever he would have done would be brought before him. If some parents had violated the rights given to them regarding their children by making them deviate from the path of the Almighty, they will have to face punishment for this attitude and if children duly recognized the rights of the Almighty together with those of their parents as well as remaining steadfast in following the obligations these rights entail, they will be rewarded for their perseverance.⁹²

13. Directives relating to Orphans

وَأَتُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ أُمُّا لَهُمْ وَلَا تَنْبَدِلُوا الْحَيْثَ بِالظَّيْبِ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أُمُّا لَهُمْ إِلَى أُمُّا لَكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حُبًّا كَبِيرًا وَإِنْ خَفْتُمْ أَلَا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانْكِحُوهُمَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مُشْتَىٰ وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبْعَةَ فِيَّنْ خَفْتُمْ أَلَا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ذَلِكَ أَدَتِي أَلَا تَعْوُلُوا وَأَتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدَقَاتَهُنَّ نَحْنُ فَإِنْ طَبِّنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُّوهُ هَنِيَّا مَرِيًّا وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَاءَ أُمُّا لَكُمْ الَّتِي حَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ قِيَاماً وَأَرْزُقُوهُمْ فِيهَا وَأَكْسُوْهُمْ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا وَأَتُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ فِيَّنْ آتَسْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ أُمُّا لَهُمْ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوهَا إِسْرَافًا وَبَدَارًا أَنْ يَكْبُرُوا وَمَنْ كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلَيُسْتَعْفَفَ وَمَنْ كَانَ فَقِيرًا فَلَيَأْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ أُمُّا لَهُمْ فَأَشْهِدُوْهُمْ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالآقْرَبُونَ وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالآقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ نَصِيبًا مَفْرُوضًا وَإِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ أُولُوا الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينُ فَأَرْزُقُوهُمْ مِنْهُ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا وَلَيُخْتَشِنَ الَّذِينَ لَوْ تَرَكُوا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرْيَةً ضَعَافًا حَافِوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَلَيَتَقْوَا اللَّهُ وَلَيَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أُمُّا لَيَتَامَىٰ ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ

92. Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 6, 130.

تَارَأَوْ سَيَّصُلُونَ سَعِيرًا (٤ : ٢ - ١٠)

And give the orphans the wealth which belongs to them. Neither exchange their valuables for your worthless ones nor devour their wealth by mixing it with yours. Indeed, this is a great sin. And if you fear that you cannot treat orphans equitably, then you may marry [their mothers] who are lawful to you: two two, three three, or four four of them. But if you fear that you cannot maintain equality [among them], marry one only or any slave-girls you may own. This will make it easier for you to avoid injustice. And give these women also their dower the way it is given; but if they choose to give to you a part of it, you may consume it willingly. And [if the orphan is naive and mentally immature as yet], do not give to these immature the wealth with which Allah has entrusted you for their sustenance and support; but feed and clothe them with its proceeds, and say words of kindness to them. And keep judging these orphans until they reach a marriageable age. Then if you find them capable of sound judgment, hand over their wealth to them, and do not devour it by squandering it and consuming it hastily fearing that they would soon come of age. And let the [guardian of the orphan] who is rich abstain [from his wealth] and [the guardian] who is poor eat [from] it [in lieu of his service] according to the norms [of society]. Then when you hand over their wealth to them, call in some witnesses; And Allah alone suffices to take account of all your actions. Men shall have a share in what their parents and kinsmen leave and women shall have a share in what their parents and kinsmen leave whether this legacy be little or much, as an ascertained amount. However, if relatives, orphans, or the needy who happen to come by at the division of an inheritance, give them too a share of it, and speak to them kind words. And those people should fear that if they themselves would have left their young children after their own death, they would have been very anxious. For this reason, fear Allah and speak for justice [in every matter]. Undoubtedly, those who unjustly devour the wealth of orphans swallow fire into their bellies; and soon they shall burn in the flames of Hell. (4:2-10)

The Qur'ān has referred to the welfare of the orphans and to the attitude of kindness and affection that should be adopted towards them at various places. In the above quoted verses of Sūrah Nisā', certain specific directives are given about them. They can be summarized as follows:

1. Guardians of the orphans should return their wealth to them and should not think of devouring it themselves. They should know that unjustly consuming the wealth of orphans is like filling one's belly with fire. Furthermore, this will lead them to the fire of Hell in the Hereafter. So no one should try to swap his poor merchandise and assets for their good ones. Neither should a person try to benefit from their wealth while mixing it with his own feigning administrative ease. If such intermingling needs to be done, then it should only be for the orphans' welfare and well-being and not to usurp their wealth.

2. Protecting the orphans' wealth and safeguarding their rights are significant

responsibilities. If it becomes difficult to fulfil these responsibilities alone, and people think that ease and facility can be created by involving the mothers of the orphans, then they can marry the lawful among them. Their number should not exceed four. However, such multiple marriages should only be resorted to if a person is able to deal justly with the wives. If they think that they would not be able to do so, then even for an objective as noble as welfare of the orphans they should not marry more than one. Justice should always reign supreme. Moreover, while entering into marriage, the mothers of the orphans should also be given *mahr* (dower) just as other women are given.⁹³ The pretext that marriage has been contracted with them for the welfare of their own children is not acceptable in this regard. However, if such a mother gladly forgoes a portion or the total *mahr* amount, then of course this generosity can be benefited from.

3. Wealth is a means of sustenance and subsistence for people. It should not be wasted. Consequently, the directive of returning to orphans their money should be carried out when they reach maturity and are able to properly manage their wealth. Prior to this, it should remain in the protection of their guardians, who should continue to judge the orphans regarding their ability to manage and handle daily affairs. In this interim period, however, the orphans' needs should be provided for. The guardians should not hastily consume the wealth of the orphans fearing that they will lose access to this wealth because the orphans will soon reach maturity. In addition, the guardians must take note to speak very affectionately to the orphans.

4. If a guardian is well-off, he should not take anything from the orphans in return for his service, and if he is poor, he can take his due according to the norms of the society. Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī writes:

... norms (مَعْرُوفٌ) means to benefit in a sensible manner from the wealth of the orphans in a way that is congruous with the nature of obligations, status of the property, general circumstances and the standard of living of the guardian. It should not be the case that a sane person should start speedily devouring and consuming the wealth of an orphan thinking that he would soon reach the age of maturity.⁹⁴

5. When the time comes to hand over an orphan his wealth, some trustworthy and reliable people should be made witnesses in order to avoid any misconceived notions and dissensions. One should also remember that one day this account shall be presented before the Almighty. He sees and knows all things and nothing can be hidden from Him.

6. Although the shares of the heirs to a deceased are fixed, yet if at the time of distribution of inheritance some close relatives, orphans or poor people happen to come by, then even though they may not have any legal right in the inheritance, they should be given something and be spoken to in a befitting manner at their

93. The questions which arise on these conditions are answered by the Qur'ān in 4:127-30. I have already explained this earlier under the section "Polygamy".

94. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 2, 255.

departure. On such occasions, a person should always keep in mind that his own children can become orphans and he may one day have to similarly leave them at the mercy of others.

14. Slavery

وَالَّذِينَ يَتَّعُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ فَكَانُوْهُمْ إِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ فِيهِمْ حَيْرًا وَأَنْوَهُمْ مِنْ مَالِ اللَّهِ
الَّذِي آتَاكُمْ (٢٤: ٣٣)

And if any of your slaves ask for *mukātabat*, give it to them if you know any good in them and [for this] give them out of the wealth which Allah has given to you. (24:33)

The above quoted verse of Sūrah Nūr mentions the directive of *mukātabat*. At the time of the revelation of the Qur’ān, the institution of slavery was as essential to the economic and social needs of the society as the institution of interest is considered in present day societies. In markets, slave-men and slave-women were bought and sold, and affluent houses had slave-men and slave-women of all ages. In such circumstances, a sudden directive for their emancipation would have resulted in many evils: for livelihood, men would have been forced to resort to beggary and women to prostitution. For this very reason, the Qur’ān adopted a gradual way to eradicate this evil from the society and after many gradual measures of eradication, the above quoted verse revealed a directive for their liberation. The word “*mukātabat*” used in it as a term which means that a slave make a contract with his master according to which he would be required to pay a certain sum of money in a specific time period or would carry out a specific service for his master; once he successfully fulfils either of these two options, he would stand liberated. In the above quoted verse, the Almighty has directed the Muslims to necessarily accept this contract made by a slave if he wants to make it and has the required ability to become financially independent. It is further stated that a Muslim government should spend money from the public treasury, which here is called the treasury of God, in helping such slaves. It is evident from the words of the verse that just as this right of *mukātabat* was granted to slave-men, it was also granted to slave-women. This, in other words, was in fact a declaration that slaves could now be masters of their destiny and could obtain liberation whenever they wanted.

The above stated verse is the last directive regarding slavery. Prior to this, various other directives were given at various stages because of which it gradually became possible for this evil to be eradicated from the society. These are summarized below:

1. In the very beginning of its revelation, the Qur’ān regarded emancipation of slaves as a great virtue, and urged people in a very effective way to do so. The tremendous appeal found in the words it adopted فَكُرْقَبَة (release the necks) can be well imagined by a person who has flare for the language. It is evident from

the context of such expressions – wherever they are found in the Qur’ān – that it has regarded this virtue to be the first as well as the greatest step in pleasing God.⁹⁵

In a similar manner, the Prophet (sws) also urged Muslims to liberate humanity from the yoke of slavery in the following words: “Whoever liberated a Muslim slave, the Almighty in return for every limb of that slave would shield every limb of that person from Hell.”⁹⁶

2. People were urged that until they free their slaves they should treat them with kindness. The way their masters had total and unchecked control on them in the age of ignorance was put an end to. They were told that slaves are human beings too, and no one should in any way violate the rights they possess as human beings.

Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrated from the Prophet (sws): “a slave has a right to food and clothing, and he shall not be asked to carry out an errand that is beyond him.”⁹⁷

Abū Dharr al-Ghfārī (rta) narrates from the Prophet (sws): “They are your brothers. The Almighty has made them subservient to you. So whatever you eat, feed them with it, whatever you wear, clothe them with it and never ask them to do something which is beyond them and if there is such a task, then help them out with it.”⁹⁸

Ibn ‘Umar (rta) narrates from the Prophet (sws) that he heard him say: “Whoever slapped a slave or beat him up should atone this sin by liberating him.”⁹⁹

Abū Mas‘ūd al-Anṣārī (rta) says: “Once when I was beating my slave I heard a voice from behind me: ‘O Abū Mas‘ūd you should know that the Almighty has more power over you.’ When I turned back, I found that it was the Prophet. I immediately remarked: ‘O Messenger of God! I release him for the sake of God.’ The Prophet said: ‘Had you not done this, you would have been given the punishment of the Fire.’”¹⁰⁰

Ibn ‘Umar (rta) narrates that once a person came to the Prophet (sws) and asked: “How many times should we forgive our servant.” [At this], the Prophet kept quiet. He asked again and the Prophet again kept silent. Upon being asked the third time, he answered: “Seventy times in a day.”¹⁰¹

3. In cases of un-intentional murder, *zihār*, and other similar offences, liberating a slave was regarded as their atonement and *ṣadaqah*.¹⁰²

95. The Qur’ān 90:13.

96. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 407, (no. 2517); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 657, (no. 3795).

97. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 732, (no. 4316).

98. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1056, (no. 6050); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 732, (nos. 4313, 4315).

99. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 729, (no. 4298).

100. Ibid., 731, (no. 4308).

101. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 343, (no. 5164); Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr*, vol. 3, 500, (no. 1949).

102. The Qur’ān: 4:92, 58:3, 5:89.

4. It was directed to marry off slave-men and slave-women who were capable of marriage so that they could become equivalent in status – both morally and socially – to other members of the society.¹⁰³

5. If a person were to marry a slave-woman of someone, great care was exercised since this could result in a clash between ownership and conjugal rights. However, such people were told that if they did not have the means to marry free-women, they could marry, with the permission of their masters, slave-women who were Muslims and were also kept chaste. In such marriages, they must pay their dowers so that this could bring them gradually equal in status to free-women. The Qur’ān says:

وَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلًا أَنْ يَنكِحَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ فَمِنْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ مِنْ فَتَيَاتِكُمْ
الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ فَإِنْ كَحُوهُنَّ بِإِذْنِ أَهْلِهِنَّ وَأَتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ مُحْصَنَاتٌ غَيْرُ مُسَافَحَاتٍ وَلَا مُتَّخِذَاتٍ أَخْدَانٍ ... ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ الْعَنْتَ مِنْكُمْ
وَأَنْ تَصْبِرُوا حَيْثُ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٢٥:٤)

And if any of you have not the means wherewith to wed free believing women, he may wed believing girls from among those whom you own: and Allah has full knowledge about your faith. You are of the same species: so wed them with the permission of their owners, and give them their dowers, according to the norms; with the condition that they should be kept chaste, neither being lustful, nor taking paramours ... this permission is for those among you who fear sin; but it is better for you that you practice self-restraint. And Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (4:25)

6. In the heads of *zakāh*, a specific head (for [freeing] necks) was instituted so that the campaign of slave emancipation could receive impetus from the public treasury.¹⁰⁴

7. Fornication was regarded as an offence as a result of which prostitution centres that were operated by people on the basis of their slave-women were shut down automatically, and if someone tried to go on secretly running this business, he was given exemplary punishment.¹⁰⁵

8. People were told that they were all slaves of Allah and so instead of using the words عَبْد (slave-man) and اَمَة (slave-woman), the words used should be فَتَى (boy/man) and فَتَاه (girl/woman) so that the psyche about them should change and a change is brought about in age old concepts.¹⁰⁶

9. A big source of the institution of slavery at the advent of the last Prophet (sws) was the prisoners of war. When such a situation arose for the Muslims, the

103. The Qur’ān: 24:32-3.

104. The Qur’ān, 9:60.

105. For further details, see the chapter: “The Penal Sharī‘ah”.

106. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 998, (nos. 5875, 5877).

Qur’ān emphasized that they cannot be kept as slaves and must be kept as prisoners of war. After this, if they were to be released, then there were two possibilities: they could be freed either by accepting ransom or as a favour by not taking any ransom money. No other option was available to the Muslims.¹⁰⁷

107. The Qur’ān, 47:4; for further details, see the chapter: “The Sharī‘ah of Jihād”.

The Political Sharī‘ah

Man, by his nature, is a social being: a social set-up is an essential requirement of the nature on which God has created him. However, to protect this social set-up from the misuse of his God-given free-will he, soon or late, is forced to protect the created social set-up by organizing it as a collective system. In the history of mankind, politics and governments have originated as a result of this desire of man for a social set-up and this need of his to safeguard it from disorder. As long as man remains true to his nature, he cannot get rid of either this desire or this need. Therefore, prudence demands that instead of dreaming of a stateless society in this world, he should strive to constitute a social contract that cleanses the state system from evils and develops it in the right direction thereby providing it with the basis of a fair and upright government.

No doubt, for the most part, man's own nature instructed him to constitute such a social contract. However, the results alone of his labours that can be seen clearly by everyone attest to the utmost to the fact that, as in other affairs of human life, human intellect is unable to decisively resolve certain basic issues in this regard without divine guidance. It is to fulfil this need that the Gracious Almighty has given man a detailed political *sharī‘ah* through His Book and through His last Prophet (sws).

This *sharī‘ah* consists of the following issues:

1. The Basic Principle
2. The Real Responsibility
3. Religious Obligations
4. Citizenship and the Rights of Citizens
5. The State System

In the following pages, I shall attempt to explain this *sharī‘ah* in the light of the Qur'ān:

1. The Basic Principle

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولَئِي الْأُمُورِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَي

اللهُ وَالرَّسُولُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ ثَوْبًا (٤:٥٩)

Believers! Obey God and obey the Prophet and those of you who are in authority, and if you disagree among yourselves in any matter, refer it to God and the Prophet if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is better and more seemly as regards the consequences. (4:59)

This directive was given to the Muslims when the Qur’ān was being revealed and the Prophet (sws) was present among them. Consequently, they had the opportunity to refer back all their disagreements to him whenever they wanted. Obviously, since the authority of Allah and His Prophet (sws) is eternal, therefore in all affairs in which an eternal directive has been given by them, it is now incumbent upon those in authority whether they are the rulers or members of the parliament to submit to them forever. The orders and directives of these rulers can only be carried out subsequent to obeying Allah and His Prophet (sws), and only if they do not overrule or exceed the limits adjudicated by Allah and His Prophet (sws). Therefore, Muslims cannot enact any law in their country which is contrary to the Qur’ān and Sunnah or without taking into consideration the guidance these sources provide. The believers indeed have a right to disagree with those in authority, but they cannot disagree with Allah and His Prophet (sws). In fact, in any disagreement between believers, the decision must be made in accordance with the Qur’ān and Sunnah.

However, there are certain stipulations regarding obeying those in authority in subservience to God and the Prophet (sws) which the Prophet (sws) has explained:

First, Muslims must fully cling to state authority in all circumstances. The Prophet (sws) has termed state authority as *الْجَمَاعَةَ* (*al-jamā‘ah*) and *الْسُّلْطَانَ* (*al-sultān*) and directed every Muslim to in no way disassociate himself from it. He has further clarified that if anyone does so, it is as if he has left Islam, and a Muslim who dies in this state is as if he died the death of *jāhiliyyah*. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

مَنْ رَأَى مِنْ أَمْرِيهِ شَيْئًا يَكْرَهُهُ فَلَا يَصِيرُ عَلَيْهِ فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ فَارَقَ الْجَمَاعَةَ شِبْرًا فَمَاتَ إِلَّا مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

He who sees something despicable in his ruler should bear it, for he who even slightly disassociates himself from the state authority and dies in this condition shall die the death of *jāhiliyyah*.¹

Another text of this Ḥadīth reads:

مَنْ كَرِهَ مِنْ أَمْرِيهِ شَيْئًا فَلَا يَصِيرُ فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ خَرَجَ مِنْ السُّلْطَانِ شِبْرًا مَاتَ مِيتَةً جَاهِلِيَّةً

He who sees something despicable in his ruler should bear it, for he who even slightly disassociates himself from the obedience of the sovereign crown and

1. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1217, (no. 7054).

dies in this condition shall die the death of *jāhiliyyah*.²

In times of political anarchy and chaos, the Prophet (sws) has directed Muslims not only to refrain from participating in any activity against the state, but also to obey state authority with complete faithfulness and sincerity. On one occasion, regarding this issue, the Prophet (sws), on these very grounds, is reported to have told Hudhayfah (rta): ﴿كُلُّ جَمَاعَةٍ مُسْلِمِينَ وَأَمَانَهُمْ﴾ ([in such a state of chaos], you should remain attached to the state authority and to the ruler of the Muslims.)³

Secondly, Muslims should be law abiding citizens of their country. Whatever laws are enacted should be obeyed in letter and spirit by them and in no way should they evade the law. Any disagreement, personal dislike, communal support or any sort of reservation should never lead them to breach the law, except if some law is enacted in disobedience to the Almighty. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

عَلَيْكَ السَّمْعُ وَالطَّاعَةُ فِي عُسْرِكَ وَسُرْكَ وَمَنْشَطِكَ وَمَكْرُهِكَ وَأَثْرَةَ عَلَيْكَ

It is mandatory upon you to listen to and to obey [your rulers] whether you are in difficulty or at ease, whether willingly or unwillingly and even when you do not receive what is your right.⁴

عَلَى الْمَرءِ الْمُسْلِمِ السَّمْعُ وَالطَّاعَةُ فِيمَا أَحَبَّ وَكَرِهَ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْمِنَ بِمُعْصِيَةِ فَإِنْ أُمِرَ بِمُعْصِيَةٍ فَلَا سَمْعَ وَلَا طَاعَةَ

Whether they like it or not, it is mandatory upon a Muslim to listen and to obey his rulers except when he is ordered to commit a sin. If he is ordered so, he should neither listen nor obey.⁵

اسْمَعُوا وَأَطِيعُوا وَإِنْ اسْتُعْمِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَبْدُ حَبْشَيٌّ كَانَ رَأْسَهُ زَبَبَيَّةً

Listen and obey even if an Abyssinian slave whose head is like a raisin is made your ruler.⁶

This directive of obeying those in authority obviously relates to Muslim rulers only. This is indicated by the word **مِنْكُمْ** (among you) which qualifies the word **أُوْلُو الْأَمْرِ** (those in authority) in 4:59, the verse under discussion. The Prophet (sws) while explaining this has stated that once a ruler fails to fulfil the conditions stated in the Qur’ān that make him a Muslim, it is not necessary to obey him.

2. Ibid., 1217, (no. 7053).

3. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 605, (3606); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 829-830, (no. 4784).

4. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 825, (no. 4754).

5. Ibid., 826, (no. 4763).

6. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1229, (no. 7142).

'Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit reports:

دَعَانَا النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَبِأَعْنَاهُ فَقَالَ فِيمَا أَحَدَ عَلَيْنَا أَنْ بَأَعْنَاهُ عَلَى السَّمْعِ وَالطَّاعَةِ فِي مَسْتَشْطِنَاهَا وَمَكْرُهَنَا وَعُسْرَنَا وَأَثْرَهَا عَلَيْنَا وَأَنْ لَا تُنَازِعَ الْأَمْرُ أَهْلَهُ إِلَّا أَنْ تَرَوُا كُفُرًا بِوَاحِدٍ عَنْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِيهِ بُرْهَانٌ

The Prophet (sws) called us to pledge allegiance to him which we did. [A narrator said:] among the things on which we had been asked to pledge were the following: “We shall listen and obey whether willingly or unwillingly whether we are in difficulty or at ease, and even when we do not receive what is our right and that we shall not contest the authority of our rulers. You can only contest their authority if you witness outright *kufr* in any matter from them, in which you have a clear evidence from God.”⁷

Similarly, some Ahādīth say:

إِنَّهُ يُسْتَعْمَلُ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَرَاءُ فَتَعْرُفُونَ وَتُشْكِرُونَ فَمَنْ كَرِهَ فَقَدْ بَرِئَ وَمَنْ أَنْكَرَ فَقَدْ سَلِمَ وَلَكِنْ مِنْ رَضِيَ وَتَابَعَ قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَلَا تُقَاتِلُهُمْ قَالَ لَا مَا صَلَوْا

People will rule over you some whose habits you would like and others you would dislike. He who disliked their bad habits has no blame on him and he who rejected these bad habits also remained safe. However, he who was pleased with them and followed them would be called to account. The Companions asked: “Should not then we wage war against them.” The Prophet (sws) replied: “No as long as they keep offering the prayer.”⁸

شَرَارُ أَمْتَكُمُ الَّذِينَ تُبغِضُونَهُمْ وَيُغَضِّبُونَكُمْ وَتَأْعُنُونَهُمْ وَيَأْعُنُونَكُمْ قِيلَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا نُنَابِدُهُمْ بِالسَّيِّفِ فَقَالَ لَا مَا أَقَامُوا فِيكُمُ الصَّلَاةَ

The worst of your rulers are those whom you hate and who hate you; you curse them and they curse you. It was asked: “O Prophet of Allah! Should we not put them to the sword.” The Prophet (sws) replied: “No, as long as they are diligent in the prayer among you.”⁹

However, even in these circumstances, no Muslim citizen has been given the permission to revolt against the government unless he has the backing of a clear majority behind him. The reason for this is that if the majority does not support him, then such a revolt would not be against the government; on the contrary, it would be against other Muslim citizens, which according to the *shari'ah* is *fusad* in

7. Ibid., 1217, (no. 7056).

8. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣahīḥ*, 832-833, (no. 4801).

9. Ibid., 833, (no. 4804).

(spreading lawlessness and anarchy in the society)¹⁰ – an offence regarded by the Qur'ān to be punishable by death.

The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

مَنْ أَتَاكُمْ وَأَمْرُكُمْ جَمِيعٌ عَلَى رَجُلٍ وَاحِدٍ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَشْقُّ عَصَاكُمْ أَوْ يُفْرِقَ جَمَاعَتَكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُ

When you are organized under the rule of a person and someone tries to break your collectivity apart or disrupt your government, kill him.¹¹

Moreover, it should also remain clear that if this revolt takes the shape of an armed uprising, then it should be subject to all the conditions of *jihād* imposed by the *shari'ah*. Consequently, no Muslim is allowed to take up arms in rebellion against the government unless he fulfils these conditions.

2. The Real Responsibility

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْدُوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَيَّ أَهْلَهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمًا يَعْظِلُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا (٥٨:٤)

God commands you to hand over the trusts to their rightful owners and when you judge between men, pass this judgement with fairness. Indeed this is from God an excellent admonition. Indeed, God is He who hears and sees all things. (4:58)

A look at the context of the above mentioned verse shows that it occurs right before the verse that has been discussed earlier under “The Basic Principle”. Consequently, it shows that the real responsibility of a state which is based on this principle of obedience to Allah and His Prophet (sws) is to consign the trusts of the nation on the basis of merit to people and to strive to establish justice in its ultimate form in every walk of life. Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī comments on this verse in the following words:

... this is a delineation of the most important aspect of the trust referred to as well as an explanation of the responsibility attached to political authority. The foremost responsibility of those who are blessed with political authority by the Almighty is that they should decide all disputes that arise among their people with justice and fairness. Justice means that there should be no discrimination in the eyes of the law between the various classes of society like the rich and the poor or the upper and the lower class. Justice should not be a commodity that can be bought or sold. Partiality and bias should not creep into it nor should indifference and apathy arise in dispensing it. No power or influence,

10. The Qur'ān, 5:33.

11. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 832, (no. 4798).

greed or fear of any kind should affect justice in any manner.

Whoever are blessed with political authority by the Almighty in this world, have been blessed as such so that they may discharge justice. Therefore, this is their primary responsibility. A just ruler will receive great reward from the Almighty, and an unjust will be punished grievously [on the Day of Judgement]. Consequently, the verse says that this is an excellent admonition from the Almighty to the believers, who, therefore, must not show slackness in following it. The attributes of the Almighty mentioned at the end of the verse (one who hears and sees all things) caution us that even the most concealed injustice is in His knowledge.¹²

It is to this responsibility that the Companions (rta) of the Prophet (sws) referred when they launched offensives against the Roman and the Persian empires. They proclaimed to the world that any person wishing to leave the servitude of man could do so by entering into the servitude of Allah, and any who wished to, he could leave the narrowness of this world and enter into its vastness. Finally, they stated that whoever wanted to leave the oppression of various religions and enter into the just folds of Islam could do so.¹³

The Prophet (sws), on this very basis, insisted that a person who selfishly desires public office should never be considered eligible for it, since justice cannot be expected from such a person. He is reported to have said:

إِنَّا وَاللَّهِ لَا تُؤْلِي عَلَى هَذَا الْعَمَلِ أَحَدًا سَأَلَهُ وَلَا أَحَدًا حَرَصَ عَلَيْهِ

By God! We shall not grant any person a post in this system if they ask for it and covet it.¹⁴

The Prophet (sws) also urged his Companions (rta) to fear Allah in such matters and never ask for a public office:

لَا تَسْأَلُ الْإِمَارَةَ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ أُوتِيَتَهَا عَنْ مَسْأَلَةٍ وُكْلَتِ إِلَيْهَا وَإِنْ أُوتِيَتَهَا مِنْ غَيْرِ مَسْأَلَةٍ أَعْنَتْ عَلَيْها
Do not seek a post. If it is granted to you because of your desire you shall [find yourself] being handed over to it, and if it is granted to you without your desire, you shall be helped.¹⁵

Consequently, history bears witness that in order to establish justice, the Rightly Guided Caliphs always kept their doors open for criticism and for petitions and appeals from the public, adopted the lifestyle of the destitute to the

12. Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 2, 323.

13. Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tarīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk*, vol. 4 (n.p.: Dār al-fikr, 1979), 701.

14. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 818, (no. 4717).

15. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1145, (no. 6622).

extent that they even wore patched-up clothes and administered their realms with utmost simplicity and austerity. In short, the heavens and the earth bore witness that they lived among the masses for the masses on the same standard of living as the masses: they were like kings even in indigence and princes even in poverty.

3. Religious Obligations

الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَنَّا هُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَتُوا الزَّكَةَ وَأَمْرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ (٤١:٢٢)

These believers are those who, if We grant them authority in this land, will be diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh* and enjoin what is virtuous and forbid what is evil. (22:41)

This verse of Sūrah Ḥajj states that the religious obligations imposed on the collectivity of the Muslims once they attain political authority in a country; These four obligations imposed on Muslims in their collective capacity include establishing the system of *salāh*, disbursing *zakāh*, enjoining *ma’rūf* and forbidding *munkar*.

While obeying this directive of the Qur’ān, as per the *sunnah* constituted by the Prophet (sws) for establishing *salāh* (the prayer) at the state level:

1. Muslim citizens shall be bound to say their prayers as an evidence to their belief in Islam.

2. The address of the Friday prayer shall be delivered by the head of state and he shall lead this prayer in the central congregational (*jāmi’*) mosque of the capital. The provincial governors shall be entrusted with this job in the provinces, while government representatives shall discharge this duty in the various administrative units.

Similarly, regarding *zakāh* the following *sunnah* was constituted:

A Muslim citizen who is liable to *zakāh* shall pay the stipulated amount from his wealth, produce and livestock to the government. The government in return, besides other expenditure, shall strive to fulfil the needs of its deprived citizens through this money, reaching out to them before they reach a state where they must come to the government to satisfy their basic needs.

The Qur’ān says that if Muslims pay this *zakāh*, their rulers cannot impose any other tax on them without their consent:

فَإِنْ تَأْبُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَتُوا الزَّكَةَ فَلْخُلُوْلُهُمْ (٥٩:٥)

So, if they repent, are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*, leave them alone. (9:5)

For the enjoining of *ma’rūf* (the good) and the forbidding of *munkar* (the evil), the Qur’ānic directive is that the state should constitute a group of people which should be entrusted with the responsibility of calling people towards good and forbidding them from evil. The Qur’ān says:

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَايُونَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٣:١٠٤)

And from within you should a group be constituted such that it should call towards what is virtuous, enjoin good and forbid evil. And [remember] only [those who make arrangements for this] will attain salvation. (3:104)

The punishments which have been prescribed for various crimes by the *sharī‘ah* are a corollary of the directive of forbidding evil stated in the above quoted verse.¹⁶

It is obvious that in some cases the obligation of forbidding people from evil shall be discharged by exhorting and urging them and in others through the force of law. For the first mode, those in authority have the Friday sermon available to them, which is specifically their prerogative. For the second mode, those in authority have the service of the police department which in a Muslim state is established for this very purpose and works within the jurisdiction specified for it to achieve this objective.

These are the religious obligations of a state. No doubt, every state has the responsibility to strive for the welfare and prosperity of its people and to maintain peace and defend its frontiers. However, if a state is to be administered by the Muslims, then the Qur’ān demands from them that they should not be indifferent to the responsibilities of being diligent in the prayer, setting up a system of *zakāh*, and enjoining what is good while forbidding what is evil.

4. Citizenship and the Rights of a Citizen

فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوْا الزَّكَةَ فَإِخْرَجُوهُنَّكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ (٩:١١)

So, if they repent, are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*, they are your brethren in religion. (9:11)

فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوْا الزَّكَةَ فَلْخُلُّوْسِبِيلَهُمْ (٩:٥)

So, if they repent, are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*, leave them alone. (9:5)

Both these verses of Sūrah Tawbah have the same context. The Qur’ān says that it should be proclaimed in the congregation of the *hajj* that those among the Idolaters of Arabia who fulfil the conditions stated in these verses are the brethren of the believers and that the Almighty directs the believers to spare their lives. These conditions are that people should:

16. To understand this interpretation of the verse, see the chapter: “The Sharī‘ah of Preaching”.

1. Repent from polytheism and disbelief and accept Islam.
2. Be diligent in the prayer as evidence of their faith and belief.
3. Pay *zakāh* to the state to run its affairs.

While explaining this directive of Islam, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَقْاتِلَ النَّاسَ حَتَّىٰ يَشْهُدُوا أَنَّ لَهُ إِلَهٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيَؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِذَا فَعَلُوا ذَلِكَ عَصَمُوا مِنِّي دِمَاءُهُمْ وَأَمْوَالُهُمْ إِلَيْ بِحَقِّ الْإِسْلَامِ وَحَسَابُهُمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ

"I have been directed to wage war¹⁷ against these people until they testify to the oneness of God and to the prophethood of Muhammad, are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*. If they accept these terms, their lives will be spared except if they commit some other violation that entails their immunity from this protection and [in the Hereafter] their account rests with God."¹⁸

This directive was for the Idolaters of Arabia to whom the truth had been communicated by the Prophet (sws) that they were not left with any excuse to deny it; however, it is obvious that if such people were to be meted out the death punishment and were not required to fulfil anything beyond what is stated in the verse, it is all the more befitting that those after them not be demanded anything more. Consequently, the principles which can be ascertained from these verses regarding the rights and obligations of a citizen are as follows:

First, people who fulfil these conditions, irrespective of their status in the Hereafter, shall be considered as Muslims in the eyes of the law and the state, and they shall be entitled to all the rights which, as Muslims, they should have in their state.

Second, after fulfilling these conditions the mutual relationship between the rulers and the ruled shall be that of brotherhood. They are like brothers and, therefore, possess the same legal rights. There is no question of any discrimination between them whatsoever in Islam. The Qur'anic words are فَإِخْرُجُوهُمْ فِي الدِّينِ (then [they are] your brethren in religion). The word *الدين* (the religion) obviously means Islam and the words فَإِخْرُجُوهُمْ فِي الدِّينِ (then [they are] your brethren) are directed at the Companions (rta) of the Prophet (sws), who are told that if these people fulfil these three conditions, they will be equal in citizenship status to the Companions (rta). No distinction will exist between the two in the eyes of the law.

Third, due to this fraternal relationship, all responsibilities which reason and intellect endorse shall be imposed on the rulers and the ruled.

Fourth, irrespective of the duties and obligations imposed on a person as far as

17. No one should have any misconception regarding the directive of war stated in this narrative. It is specifically directed to the Idolaters of Arabia of the time of the Prophet (sws). It had been ordained about them that after deliberately denying the truth conclusively delivered to them by the Prophet (sws), they either had the option of accepting Islam or face death.

18. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 33, (no. 129).

the accountability in the Hereafter is concerned, the collective system can only legally ask its Muslim citizens to fulfil the three requirements mentioned in these verses. Nothing can be added or taken away from this list. The Almighty Himself has fixed them once and for all; therefore, once they are fulfilled, no rule or regulation, and no state or parliament can tamper with the life, wealth, honour, and freedom of expression of the Muslims. Consequently, when the caliph Abū Bakr (rta), the first ruler of the Muslims after the Prophet (sws), launched an attack against those who had desisted to pay *zakāh* in his times, on being questioned, stated in unequivocal terms:

قال الله تعالى: فان تابوا وأقاموا الصلوة وأتوا الزكوة فخلوا سبيلهم — والله لا استئن فوقهن ولا
اقصر دونهن

The Almighty has said: “So, if they repent are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*, spare their lives.” By God I shall neither ask for more nor accept any less.¹⁹

It is evident from this discussion that indeed a state has the authority to stop its Muslim citizens from committing a crime and to punish them if they do, but, positively, a state has no authority to require anything of the Muslims except the prayer and *zakāh*. For example, it cannot force a Muslim to keep fasts nor can it compel him to perform *hajj* even if it is known that he has the financial position to do so; nor can it pass a law for compulsory military recruitment for the purpose of *jihād*. In short, as far as legislation against crimes is concerned, it has all the authority to do so, but regarding positive requirements of the *sharī‘ah*, except for the prayer and *zakāh*, it can only urge and exhort, educate and indoctrinate Muslims to fulfil them. Its jurisdiction ends here in this regard.

In the sermon of the last *hajj*, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ وَدِمَاءَكُمْ وَأَمْوَالَكُمْ وَأَغْرِضَكُمْ يَبْتَلُوكُمْ هَذَا فِي شَهْرٍ كَبُرُّهُ يَوْمُكُمْ هَذَا فِي بَلَدٍ كُمْ هَذَا

Indeed, your lives, your wealth, and your honour are as sacred and inviolable as this day of [sacrifice of] yours in this city of [Makkah of] yours in this month of [Dhū al-Hajj of] yours.²⁰

These are the rights of the Muslim citizens. As far as the rights of non-Muslims are concerned, any agreement can be made with them regarding their rights, keeping in view the circumstances and the various international accords one is bound with. In this regard, perhaps the best example before Muslims is the pact made by the Prophet (sws) before *itmām al-hujjah*²¹ with the Jews of Madīnah. It is

19. Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 3 (Beirut: ār al-kitāb al-‘arabī, 1997), 82.

20. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 16, (no. 67).

21. Communicating the truth to the extent that no one is left with an excuse to deny it.

known as the *mīthāq* of Madīnah. Similar pacts were made by Muslims later on with some other nations. Obviously, they can be made on any mutually agreed terms and conditions depending upon the circumstances. Consequently, if the *mīthāq* of Madīnah is studied, one can see that one of its statutes clearly says that after accepting the political sovereignty of Muhammad (sws), the Jews and the Muslims are equal citizens of this state of Madīnah and therefore, the Jews will have the same rights as the Muslims have here:

وَان يَهُود بَنِي عَوْف امَة مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِين لِلْيَهُود دِينَهُم وَالْمُسْلِمِين دِينَهُم مَوَالِيهِم وَأَنفُسِهِم

And the Jews of the Banū ‘Awf are acknowledged like the Muslims as one independent group. As far as religion is concerned, the Jews shall remain on theirs and the Muslims and their allies on theirs.²²

Here, no one should present Qur’ān 9:29, whose text is reproduced below, to refute what has been said above. However, it is evident from the words and the context of this verse that it is related to those People of the Book who were subjected to *itmām al-hujjah* by the Prophet (sws), and who as a consequence of their blatant denial of the truth in spite of being convinced of it were punished in this world according to the established law of the Almighty. If they wanted to escape the punishment of death in order to live in the Muslim state, they were first required to pay *jizyah* to the state and second to live in subservience to it. The words of the Qur’ān are:

قَاتَلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ
الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَتَّى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدِ وَهُنْ صَاغِرُونَ (٩:٢٩)

Fight those from among the People of the Book who believe not in Allah or the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor adopt the Religion of Truth as their own religion until they pay the *jizyah* after being subdued and live a life of submission. (9:29)

This directive is a corollary of the law of *itmām al-hujjah* and specific to the people to whom the truth had been conclusively communicated. After them, it has no bearing on other non-Muslims of the world.

5. The State System

وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى يَبْيَنُهُمْ (٤٢:٣٨)

And their system is based on their consultation. (42:38)

22. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah al-nabawiyah*, vol. 2, 107.

The system of government of a state is based upon the above quoted verse. The extensive meaning this short verse encompasses and the guidance obtained from it about the political set-up envisaged by Islam need a detailed discussion, which follows.

The first word that occurs in the verse is أَمْرٌ (*amr*). It has many meanings in Arabic. However, it is quite evident from the context and placement of this verse that here it means “system”. This meaning has been incorporated in it from the depth found in its general meaning “directive”. When the word “directive” becomes related to people, it prescribes certain limits for itself and establishes certain rules and regulations. In such cases, it implies the directives which emanate from political authority as well as the state system. A little deliberation shows that the English word “system” is used to convey the same meaning.

Since the Qur’ān has not specified it by any other adjective except by appending it to a pronoun, all sub-systems which are part of the political system must be considered included in its connotation. In fact, all affairs of state like the municipal affairs, national and provincial affairs, political and social directives, rules of legislation, delegation and revocation of powers, dismissal and appointment of officials, interpretation of Islam for the collective affairs of life – all of them fall under the principle laid down in this verse. In other words, no area or department of a Muslim state can be beyond the jurisdiction of this principle.

Next comes the word شُورَىٰ (*shūrā*). It is a verbal noun (*maṣdar*) of the category فُعْلٰى (*fu'lā*) and means “to consult”. Owing to the fact that this word occurs as an inchoative (*khabar*) in the given verse, the meaning of the verse is not the same as of the verse: شَاوِرُهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَّمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ (consult them in the affairs of the state and when you reach a decision, put your trust in Allah (3:159)), which is often quoted as its parallel. To convey the same meaning as this verse, the words should, perhaps, have been something like وَ فِي الْأَمْرِ هُمْ يُشَارِرُونَ (and in the affairs [of state] they are consulted). In this case, it would have been necessary that in the whole society the rulers and the ruled be distinct. The ruler in such a case would have to be divinely appointed or be someone who had seized power by force or nominated by an innocent *imām*. Through whatever means he reached the position of head of state, he would have only been bound to consult people in matters of national interest before forming his own opinion. He would not have been bound to accept a consensus or a majority opinion. Acceptance or rejection of an opinion would have rested on his discretion. He would have all the right to accept a minority opinion and reject a majority one without any hesitation.

However, the style and pattern of the words أَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ (their system is based on their consultation) demands that even the head of a state be appointed through consultation; the system itself be based on consultation; everyone should have an equal right in consultation; whatever is done through consultation should only be undone through consultation; everyone that is part of the system should have a say in its affairs, and in the absence of a consensus, the majority opinion should decide the matter.

The difference in meaning of the two verses can be appreciated if the following example is kept in mind. If it is said: “The ownership of this house shall be decided after consulting these ten brothers,” then it means that only the ten brothers have the authority to make decisions and the opinion of any one of them cannot prevail over the others. If all of them do not agree on the matter, a majority opinion would be decisive. But, if the above sentence is changed a little to: “In deciding the ownership of this house, these ten brothers shall be consulted,” then this sentence only means that someone else has the final say. It will be his opinion which will be regarded as final. The only thing he must do is to consult the ten brothers before forming his own opinion. Obviously, he cannot be forced to accept the consensus or majority opinion of the brothers.

Since, in the opinion of this writer, the collective system of the Muslims is based on أَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ (their system is based on their consultation), the election of their ruler as well as their representatives must take place through consultation. Also, after assuming a position of authority, they will have no right to overrule a consensus or a majority opinion of the Muslims in all the collective affairs.

Mawlānā Abū al-A‘lā Mawdūdī comments on this verse in the following words:

أَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ (their system is based on their consultation), by their nature and scope entail five things:

First, people whose interests and rights relate to the collective affairs should be given the freedom to express their opinion, and they should be kept totally aware of the actual way in which their affairs are being run; they should also have the right to object and to criticize if they see anything wrong in the way their affairs are being conducted by those in authority and the right to change these leaders if the faults are not rectified. It is outright dishonesty to forcibly silence people or to run affairs without taking them into confidence. No one can regard this attitude to be in accordance with this verse.

Second, the person who is entrusted to run the collective affairs of the people should be chosen through their absolute free consent. Consent obtained through force and intimidation, greed and gratification, deception and fraud is no consent at all. The ruler of a country is not one who obtains this position by hook or by crook; the real ruler is the person whom people choose freely without any compulsion.

Third, people chosen for consultation should enjoy the confidence of the majority. Consequently, those who are worthy of consultation can in no way be thought to enjoy the confidence of the people in the truest sense if they acquire this position through force, extortion, fraud or by leading people astray.

Fourth, people who are consulted must express their opinions in accordance with their knowledge, faith and conscience and should have the complete

freedom for such expression. If because of fear, greed or some prejudice people are led to give opinions which are against their belief and conscience, then this is disloyalty and infidelity, and is a negation of the principle of consultation.

Fifth, a decision which is made through the consensus or majority opinion of the members of the *shūrā* or which has the mandate of the people behind it must always be accepted. Because if one person or group insists on an opinion, then consultation becomes useless. The Almighty has not said: “they are consulted in their affairs”; on the contrary, He has said: “their system is based on their consultation.” Merely consulting people does not fulfil this directive; it is necessary that a consensus or majority opinion be considered as decisive in running the affairs.²³

Before his death, the Prophet (sws) clarified on the basis of this very principle that the Quraysh would be his successors and not the Anṣār:

إِنَّ هَذَا الْأَمْرَ فِي قُرَيْشٍ لَا يُعَادِيهِمْ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا كَبَةُ اللَّهِ فِي النَّارِ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ مَا أَقَمُوا الدِّينَ.

Our political authority shall remain with the Quraysh. In this matter, whoever opposes them as long as they follow Islam, Allah shall cast him face down in Hell.²⁴

The Prophet (sws) stated thus the reason for the decision he had declared:

النَّاسُ تَبْغُ لِقَرِيبِشِ فِي هَذَا الشَّاءِنَ مُسْلِمُهُمْ تَبْغُ لِمُسْلِمِهِمْ وَكَافِرُهُمْ تَبْغُ لِكَافِرِهِمْ

People in this matter follow the Quraysh. The believers of Arabia are the followers of their believers and the disbelievers of Arabia are the followers of their disbelievers.²⁵

Thus, the Prophet (sws) made it very clear that since the majority of the Arabian Muslims professed confidence in the Quraysh, they were solely entitled to take charge as the rulers of Arabia in the light of the Qur’ānic directive (their system is based on their consultation), and that they would be passed on the political authority not because of any racial precedence or superiority, but only by virtue of this position.

23. Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Qur’ān*, vol. 4, 509-510.

24. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1229, (no. 7139).

25. Ibid., 588, (no. 3495).

The Economic Sharī‘ah

The economic *shari‘ah* has been revealed by the Almighty through His last Prophet (sws) for the purification of the economy and economic affairs of a country. It is based on the Qur’ānic philosophy of creation. According to this philosophy, the Almighty has created this world as a trial and test for man; every person has therefore been made to depend on others for his living. No one in this world can live independently as regards his needs and requirements. A person of the highest rank is dependent on others and people have to turn to even the most ordinary to fulfil them. In other words, every single person has an important role to play and no person can live a life independent of others as far as his needs are concerned. The Almighty has blessed people with varying abilities, intelligence and inclinations as well as with varying means and resources. In fact, it is because of this variation that a society comes into being. In such a society, if, on the one hand, there are scholars and sages whose knowledge enlightens the whole world, writers whose works give eternal life to words and their meanings, researchers whose unique researches are praised by the whole society, leaders whose acumen resolves many problems of the collectivity, reformers whose efforts create self-awareness in mankind and rulers whose resolve and determination change the course of history, then on the other hand, the same society also has workers whose hard work produces marvels from machines, tillers of the soil whose relentless labour results in bumper crops, cooks whose adept cookery savours our taste-buds, artisans whose craftsmanship builds astounding sky scrapers and janitors with whose efforts the whole society breathes in a healthy atmosphere.. The Qur’ān says:

نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضِهِمْ لِتَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ
بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا وَرَحْمَةً رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ (٤٣: ٤٣)

We have allocated among them their livelihood in this world [in such a manner that] We have raised some in status above others so that they can mutually serve each other. And better is your Lord’s mercy than what they are amassing. (43:32)

By creating various classes of people, the Almighty is testing whether the big and

the small, the high and the low create a society based on co-operation and respect or create disorder in the world by disregarding the role each person has been ordained to play. The latter attitude would, of course, lead them to humiliation in this world and to a grievous doom in the Hereafter. The Qur'ān says:

وَنَبْلُوكُمْ بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ (٢١:٣٥)

And we are trying you by giving you happiness and sorrow to test you, and to Us you will be returned. (21:35)

It is to salvage man in this trial that the Almighty has guided him through His prophets and revealed this economic *sharī'ah* to cleanse and purify him.

Following is a summary of this *sharī'ah*:

1. Sanctity of Ownership: If a Muslim has paid his *zakāh* dues, then his rightfully owned wealth cannot be usurped or tampered with in any way, except if on account of some violation sanctioned by the religion of God and his Prophet (sws). So much so, a government has no authority to impose any tax other than *zakāh* on its Muslim citizens without their consent.

2. National Assets: Wealth and assets which are not in the ownership of an individual or cannot be in his ownership should remain in the ownership of the state so that this wealth should not get concentrated among the rich and that it be directed to those sectors of the society which are dependent on others for their needs. Similarly, certain obligations of the state can also be fulfilled through this means.

3. Usurpation of Wealth: It is prohibited to devour other people's wealth and property by unjust means. Gambling and interest are some horrendous forms of usurpation. Other economic activities should also stand permissible or prohibited in the light of this principle.

4. Documentation and Evidence: In affairs such as various financial transactions, making a will and acquiring a loan, the parties involved should write down a document and call in witnesses on the contract written. An indifference to this can at times lead to great moral misconduct.

5. Distribution of Inheritance: The wealth of every Muslim must necessarily be distributed after his death among his heirs in the following manner:

If the deceased has outstanding debts to his name, then first of all they should be paid off from the wealth he has left behind. After this, any will he may have bequeathed should be paid. The distribution of his inheritance should then follow.

No will can be made in favour of an heir ordained by the Almighty except if his circumstances, or the services rendered by him or his needs in certain situations

call for it. Similarly, a person who has severed the foundations of kinship with a person through his words and deeds cannot be his heir.

After giving the parents and the spouses their shares, the children are the heirs of the remaining inheritance. If the deceased does not have any male offspring and there are only two or more girls among the children, then they shall receive two-thirds of the inheritance left over, and if there is only one girl, then her share is one-half. If the deceased has only male children, then all his wealth shall be distributed among them. If he leaves behind both boys and girls, then the share of each boy shall be equal to the share of two girls and, in this case also, all his wealth shall be distributed among them.

In the absence of children, the deceased's brothers and sisters shall take their place. After giving the parents and spouses their shares, the brothers and sisters shall be his heirs. The proportion of their shares and the mode of distribution shall be the same as that of the children stated above.

If the deceased has children or if he does not have children and has brothers and sisters, then the parents shall receive a sixth each. If he does not even have brothers and sisters and the parents are the sole heirs, then one-third of his wealth shall be given to the mother and two-thirds to the father.

If the deceased is a man and he has children, then his wife shall receive one-eighth of what he leaves, and if he does not have any children, then his wife's share shall be one-fourth. If the deceased is a woman and does not have any children, then her husband shall receive one-half of what she leaves and if she has children, then the husband's share is one-fourth.

In the absence of these heirs, the deceased can make someone an heir. If the person who is made an heir is a relative and has one brother or one sister, then they shall be given a sixth of his share and he himself shall receive the remaining five-sixth. However, if he has more than one brother or sister, then they shall be given a third of his share and he himself shall receive the remaining two-thirds.

1. Sanctity of Ownership

فِإِنْ تَأْبُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاءَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ (٥٩)

Then if they repent, are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*, leave them alone. (9:5)

This verse explains to the Idolaters of Arabia the conditions which they had to fulfil to become Muslim citizens of the state of Madīnah. If this context of the verse is kept in consideration, it follows from the words *فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ* (*fa khallū sabilahum*: then leave them alone) that just as a state cannot tamper with the life, honour and freedom of expression of people who have acquired its citizenship after fulfilling the conditions stated in the verse, it also has no right to commit any excesses against their assets, wealth and property. If they accept Islam as their religion, establish the prayer and are willing to pay *zakāh*, the Almighty

bids the state to leave them to themselves and not forcibly demand a single penny from them once they have paid *zakāh*. The Prophet (sws), while explaining this directive, is reported to have said:

أَمْرَتُ أَنْ أُقَاتِلَ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَشْهُدُوا أَنَّ لَهُ إِلَهًا إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْثِرُوا الرَّسْكَةَ فَإِذَا فَعَلُوا عَصْمَوْا مِنِي دِمَاءَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ إِلَّا بِحَقِّ إِلَلَامِ وَحِسَابُهُمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ

I have been directed to fight¹ with these people until they testify to the oneness of Allah and the prophethood of Muhammad, are diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh*. If they accept these conditions, their lives shall be given protection except if they are deprived of this protection on the grounds of some offence they commit.² As far as their account is concerned, it rests with Allah.³

This same directive is also for every Muslim state. The reason for this is that when the Almighty did not give permission to His Messenger even in his own rulership to demand anything over and above *zakāh*, how can it be allowed to others. Thus, as per this verse, a government has no right to impose any sort of tax on its Muslim citizens without their consent except *zakāh*, the rates of which have been fixed in their wealth by the Almighty through His prophets. In the sermon of the Last *hajj*, the Prophet (sws) asserted that the wealth of a Muslim has eternal sanctity. Without the permission of the Almighty, no one has the authority to violate this sanctity. The following subtle words allude to this:

إِنَّ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَأَمْوَالَكُمْ حَرَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَحُرْمَةٍ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا فِي شَهْرٍ كُمْ هَذَا فِي بَلْدِكُمْ هَذَا

Indeed, your blood and your wealth are as sacred and inviolable as this day⁴ of yours, this month⁵ of yours in this city⁶ of yours.⁷

2. National Assets

مَا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَى فَلِلَّهِ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةً يَبْيَنُ الْأَعْتِيَاءَ مِنْكُمْ (٧:٥٩)

1. No one should have any misconception regarding the directive of war stated in this narrative. It is specifically directed to the Idolaters of Arabia of the time of the Prophet (sws). It had been ordained about them that after deliberately denying the truth conclusively delivered to them by the Prophet (sws), they either had the option of accepting Islam or face death.

2. For example, they shall be executed or be liable to pay *diyat* for murder.

3. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 7, (no. 25).

4. ie. the day of sacrifice.

5. ie. the month of Dhū al-Hajj.

6. ie. the city of Makkah.

7. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 513-516, (no. 2950).

Whatever the Almighty has bestowed on His Prophet from the people of the cities, it is reserved for Allah and His Prophet and the relatives of the Prophet and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarers so that it may not circulate in only the rich among you. (59:7)

The context of this verse is that in the Prophet's times when people demanded that the wealth, land and assets obtained from the enemy against whom no war had been waged be distributed among them, the Qur'ān refused this demand; it asserted that they belonged to Allah and the Prophet (sws) and were reserved for the collective requirements of the state and religion, and for the poor and needy. This, according to the Qur'ān, was necessary so that wealth should not get concentrated among the rich and that it be directed to those sectors of the society who, because of their natural disabilities and lack of resources, are unable to struggle for their livelihood or for some reason are left far behind others in earning for themselves.

Since the wealth and assets referred to in the above mentioned verse were obtained without any real assistance from the believers merely through the Almighty's help in accordance with His law regarding His messengers, all of these were reserved for collective purposes. The spoils of war obtained in the times of the Prophet (sws) in various battles fought in Arabia were also owned by Allah and the Prophet (sws)⁸ because of the peculiar nature of these armed offensives. However, since the believers had also assisted in acquiring them by using their personal weapons, camels and horses as well as food, camps and various other items needed during these wars, it was necessary that the spoils be distributed among them. Nevertheless, even in these spoils, the Qur'ān reserved 1/5th of the share for these collective purposes:

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ خُمُسَهُ وَلِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ (٤١:٨)

And you should know that a fifth of the spoils you get hold of are for Allah and the Prophet and his near relatives and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer. (8:41)

These verses provide a specific guidance to every Muslim state: Wealth and assets which are not in the ownership of an individual or cannot be in his ownership should remain in the ownership of the state so that besides fulfilling some other needs of the state through them they are directed to those sectors of the society which are dependent on others for their needs.

As far as the way in which this public wealth and property are to be organized is concerned, the *shari‘ah* has left the matter to the circumstances which prevail

8. [O Prophet!] They ask you about the spoils of war. Say: “The spoils belong to Allah and the Prophet.” (8:1)

in a society and upon the general well-being of the Muslims. Therefore, the rulers of an Islamic state in consultation with the elected representatives can adopt whatever measures they deem appropriate in this regard. Consequently, it is known that the Prophet (sws), in his times, gave the lands of Khaybar for crop sharing,⁹ left certain lands under the permanent control of certain people for whom these lands had been reserved,¹⁰ regarded certain lands as *himā*,¹¹ left certain things to be shared equally by every one,¹² fixed the principle of *al-aqrab fa al-aqrab* (nearest to the next nearest) for using the water of certain springs and canals¹³ or the way the caliph ‘Umar (rta) imposed a fixed amount of tribute (*kharāj*) on the state owned lands of Syria and Iraq conquered in his times, according to the extent of their produce while leaving them in the hands of their previous owners.¹⁴

3. Usurpation of Wealth

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْتَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْكُمْ (٢٩:٤)
Believers! Do not devour one another's wealth by wrongful means except through trading by mutual consent. (4:29)

This verse prohibits a person from devouring other people's wealth through means which are against justice, honesty, fairness and against the good conventions of a society. It is this directive of the Qur'ān which forms the basis of all prohibitions in Islam that pertain to economic matters. Obtaining money through illegal gratification, theft, extortion, lying, co-operation with evil, embezzlement, misappropriation, consuming unclaimed items without publicizing them, all come under it. These evils require no further discussion since they are universally acknowledged sins in every society and in every religion. Transactions and activities which become a source of deceit or damage for the parties involved are also corollaries of this directive. Their various forms which the Prophet (sws) forbade in his own times are:

Selling something before its possession is taken.¹⁵

9. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 678-679, (no. 3967).

10. Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 170, (no. 3058).

11. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 381, (no. 2370); Ahmād ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 5, 22 (no. 16227).

12. Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 187, (nos. 2473); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 276, (no. 3477); Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 5, 7, (no. 23194).

13. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 379, (no. 2361).

14. Abū Yūsuf Ya‘qūb ibn Ibrāhīm, *Kitāb al-kharāj*, *Faṣl fi al-fay wa al-kharāj*, (n.p.: 1302 AH), 26-29.

15. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 342, (no. 2132); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 662, (no. 3839).

Selling grain bought in mounds before bringing it to the place where it is sold.¹⁶

Selling and purchasing done by a city-dweller for a villager.¹⁷

Increasing one's bid in an auction just for deception.¹⁸

Bargaining when someone else is bargaining.¹⁹

Muḥāqalah: Selling crop when it is still in the spikes.²⁰

Muzābanah: Selling the dates which are on a date-tree in exchange for plucked dates.²¹

Mu‘āwamah: Selling the fruits of trees for many years.²²

Thuniyā: Leaving an unspecified exception in a bargain. One of its forms, for example was that the seller would say: "I sell my grain to you, but I will take something out of it."²³

Mulāmasah: A deal in which a person, without thinking, just touches the other person's cloth and a deal is made in this manner.²⁴

Munābadhah: A deal in which people throw something towards one another and, in this way, a bargain is made.²⁵

Bay‘ ilā Ḥabal al-Ḥabalah: A deal in which people sell camels by saying: "Whatever offspring this camel gives birth to and when that offspring gets pregnant, whatever it gives birth to, then the [last] offspring is bought by me."²⁶

Bay‘ al-Ḥaṣāh: In pre-Islamic times, such a bargain existed generally in two forms: (a) people would make a deal about a piece of land and then the buyer would throw a pebble; the distance covered by the pebble would be regarded as the length of the sold land, and (b) people would throw a pebble and say that whatever thing it touched would be considered as sold.²⁷

Selling fruits of a tree before their quality and characteristics become evident.²⁸

16. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 341, (no. 2124); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 662, (no. 3841).

17. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 346, (no. 2161); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 594, (no. 3459).

18. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 344, (no. 2142); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 660, (no. 3818)

19. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 346, (no. 2161); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 594, (no. 3459).

20. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 347-349, (nos. 2172, 2173, 2184, 2186).

21. Ibid.

22. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 671, (no. 3913).

23. Ibid.

24. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 97, (no. 584); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 658-659, (no. 3801).

25. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 341, (no. 2144); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 639, (no. 3806).

26. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 344, (no. 2143); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 659, (no. 3810).

27. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 658, (no. 3808).

28. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 242, (no. 1486); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 666, (no. 3865).

Selling spikes before they turn white and become safe from calamities.²⁹

Selling a commodity which is defective, except when the buyer is informed of its defects.³⁰

Holding the milk of camels and goats in their udders before selling it.³¹

Intercepting tradesmen and buying their merchandise before they reach the markets.³²

Making a deal by giving money in advance such that a person obtains the item after it is ready except if this transaction is carried out for a fixed measure, a specified weight and a definite period of time.³³

Mukhābarah: Adopting methods of crop-sharing in which the profit of the landlord is fixed before hand.³⁴

Adopting methods of crop-sharing in which the production of a particular area of land is regarded as the right of the landlord.³⁵

Selling jointly owned properties without giving the shareholders a chance to buy them except if the ownership divisions are determined and the paths are separated.³⁶

These are the various forms of sale and purchase and crop-sharing which the Prophet (sws) prohibited in his times. Since all the above mentioned directives are based on the underlying bases of deceit and damage, the directive of prohibition will stand dissolved in circumstances in which these bases no longer exist, just as if, as a result of evolution and development of civilizations, these bases emerge in some new economic activity, then that activity will also stand prohibited.

Gambling and interest also belong to this category of devouring wealth through wrongful means. This writer will now venture to elaborate the view of the Qur’ān in detail on these two hideous crimes.

i. Gambling

Gambling, everyone knows, is merely chancing one’s luck. The Qur’ān has called it “from among the filthy works of Satan”. Obviously, this expression has been employed because gambling gives rise to moral misconduct in a person which gradually encompasses his personality. The reason is that if an economic

29. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 242, (no. 1486); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 666, (no.3864).

30. Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 64, (no. 2246).

31. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 344, (no. 2148).

32. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 346, (no. 2165); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 660, (no.3819).

33. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 357, (no. 2240); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 697, (no. 4118).

34. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 383, (no. 2381); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 671, (no. 3911).

35. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 373-374, (no. 2327).

36. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 359, (no. 2257); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 671, (no. 4127).

activity is based on rights and services and rational decisions, it develops a high moral character, and if an economic activity is based on mere chance, fortune and fortuity, it produces an attitude which is based on avoidance of hard work and service. This gives rise to such mean qualities as cowardice and faint-heartedness which subsequently eliminate the innate qualities of honour, integrity, sincerity and self-respect. As a result, a person becomes unmindful to the remembrance of the Almighty and to the prayer, and instead of having love and affection for his fellow beings, he has nothing but enmity and hatred for them. The Qur'ān says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ
لَعْلَكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبُعْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ
وَيَصُدُّكُمْ عَنِ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ فَهُلْ أَتْتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ (٩١:٥)

Believers! This liquor and gambling and idols and these divining arrows are abominations devised by Satan. Avoid them that you may succeed. Satan seeks to stir up enmity and hatred among you by means of liquor and gambling and to keep you from the remembrance of Allah and from the prayer. Will you not then abstain from them? (5:90-91)

An important point to note is that gambling in pre-Islamic times was also a means through which the rich showed their generosity and helped the poor and needy. In winters, when cold winds blew in and caused conditions akin to drought, the courageous would gather at various places, drink liquor and in their state of inebriation would slaughter any camels they could get hold of. They would pay the owner of the camels whatever price he demanded. They would then gamble on the meat of the slaughtered camels. Whatever parts of meat a person won in this gambling, he would generously distribute them among the poor who would gather around them on such occasions. In pre-Islamic Arabia, this was a matter of great honour and people who took part in this activity were considered very philanthropic and generous. The poets would narrate the accounts of their benevolence in their odes. On the other hand, people who stayed away from this activity would be called *barm* (stingy).

It was this very utility of liquor and gambling which prompted people to inquire when they were regarded as prohibited items. The Qur'ān asserted in its reply that in spite of possessing this benefit, they were instrumental in producing moral misconduct in an individual, which in no case can be allowed:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِنْهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا (٢١٩:٢)

They ask you about liquor and gambling. Tell them: "There is great sin in them and some profits as well for people; But their sin is greater than their profit." (2:219)

ii. Interest

Interest is also a similar sin that morally pollutes a person as well as the institutions involved in its transactions. Those who lend on interest totally safeguard their capital by not risking it in any way and extort profit from the poor borrower. In Arabic, it is called *ribā* and the Qur'ān has used this very word for it. Everyone who understands Arabic, knows that it implies a fixed increase which a lender demands from the borrower just because he has given him the permission to use his money for a certain period. The Qur'ān has vehemently prohibited it in the following words:

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقُولُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُولُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسٍّ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا
الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا وَأَحَلَ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَمَ الرِّبَا فَمَنْ جَاءَهُ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَأَنْتَهَى فَلَهُ مَا سَلَفَ وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَيَّ
اللَّهُ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٢٧٥:٢)

Those who devour interest will rise up on the Day of Judgement like the man whom Satan has driven to madness by his touch because they claim that trading is like interest and how strange it is that Allah has permitted trading and forbidden interest. Consequently, he who received this warning from the Almighty and desisted [in obedience thereto], then whatever he has taken in the past belongs to him and his fate is in the hands of Allah. And those who repeat [the offence] will be companions of the Fire and will abide therein forever. (2:275)

It is further stated:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشْعُوا اللَّهَ وَدُرُوا مَا يَقِي مِنَ الرِّبَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ فَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا فَادْكُنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِنْ
اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِنْ تُبْتَمِ فَلَكُمْ رُءُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَظْلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ (٢٧٩-٢٧٨: ٢)

Believers! Fear Allah and give up what remains of your demand for interest. If you do it not, beware of war from Allah and His Prophet. And if you repent, then you can have your principal amount. Neither will you be allowed to deal unjustly nor will you be dealt with unjustly. (2:278-279)

The reason why devourers of interest will be raised up on the Day of Judgement as madmen owes itself to their expression of amazement on the fact that the Almighty has not prohibited trading while He has prohibited interest, whereas there is no difference between the two. They maintain that if a trader can demand profit on his capital, why can't a lender on interest demand profit on his capital. According to the Qur'ān, only a madman can give such an insane statement and such insanity demands that its reward be no different than insanity itself. So in accordance with the law of similarity between the deed and its reward, such people would be raised up as madmen on the Day of Judgment.

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, while commenting on this expression of amazement of interest-devourers, remarks:

It is evident from the objection raised by the interest-devourers that the breed of people who regard interest and trading as analogous to one another is not very rare after all. It was found even in olden times. The Qur’ān has ... not even commented on this foolish inference since its baseless nature is self-evident and only sheds light on the insanity of those who raise it. A trader invests his capital in a trade which is in demand from the people. He makes his merchandise available to people through hard work and by taking a lot of risk. These people, in the first place, were not in a position to procure this merchandise themselves, and if they were able to then it was only at a heavy cost. Moreover, a trader spews his capital in the open market for competition and his profit is determined by the low and high trends of the market itself. He may end up losing all his money due to these trends and he may be able to make some profit. So his hands are tied in this enterprise as he cannot earn a single penny of profit in selling his merchandise until his invested capital enters the market after being exposed to the risks and fluctuations of the market forces and after once again providing service to society.

So how can the enterprise of a trader, who takes risk and provides service to the society when he invests his capital, be compared to that of an interest-devourer whose enterprise is mean, callous, cowardly and hostile to humanity in its very nature. He is a person who is not willing to take the slightest risk with his capital but is very eager to extort profit.³⁷

Here it should be kept in mind that the Qur’ān has prohibited only the charging of interest; it has not prohibited the paying of interest. However, as a natural consequence of this prohibition, a person who, without any genuine reason, acts as an agent of an interest-devourer or writes down its transaction or bears witness to it, must be regarded as an equal criminal on the Qur’ānic principle of تعاون على الاتّام (co-operation with evil). It is narrated by Wahb ibn ‘Abdullāh (rta):

لَعْنَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ... أَكَلَ الرِّبَا وَمُؤْكِلُهُ

The Prophet has severely condemned the devourer of interest and the one who acts as an agent³⁸ of the interest-devourer.³⁹

The Prophet (sws) has emphatically directed people to refrain from the slightest possible trace of interest while borrowing in barter as well:

الذَّهَبُ بِالذَّهَبِ وَرَزْنَا بِرَزْنٍ مِثْلًا بِمِثْلٍ وَالْفَضَّةُ بِالْفَضَّةِ وَرَزْنَا بِرَزْنٍ مِثْلًا بِمِثْلٍ فَمَنْ رَازَ أَوْ اسْتَرَادَ فَهُوَ رِبٌّ

37. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 1, 632-633.

38. These agents can be the ones who work for professional money-lenders or work in the institutions set up by them.

39. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 955, (no. 5347).

If you lend gold, then take back the same type and the same amount of gold; and if you lend silver, then take back the same type and the same amount of silver; for he who gave more or desired more, then this is precisely what interest is.⁴⁰

الْوَرْقُ بِالذَّهَبِ رِبَا إِلَى هَاءَ وَهَاءَ وَأَبْرُ بِالْبَلْرِ رِبَا إِلَى هَاءَ وَهَاءَ وَالشَّعِيرُ بِالشَّعِيرِ رِبَا إِلَى هَاءَ وَهَاءَ وَالثَّمُرُ
بِالثَّمُرِ رِبَا إِلَى هَاءَ وَهَاءَ

If you lend gold in exchange for silver, then there is a possibility of interest in this.⁴¹ Similarly, for wheat in exchange for another type of wheat,⁴² barley in exchange for another type of barley, date for another type of date. Indeed if the exchange is done on the spot, then there is no harm.⁴³

This is the correct meaning of the above quoted Ahādīth. If all the Ahādīth on this topic had remained intact, the scholars of our *ummah* would not have faltered in interpreting them. However, owing to the misinterpretation of the narrators in some chains of narration, the words هاءَ وَهَاءَ (on the spot), or similar words in the second Hadīth quoted above, were incorporated in the first one; similarly, the word الذَّهَبُ بِالذَّهَبِ (gold in exchange for gold) of the Ḥadīth quoted first were put in place of الْوَرْقُ بِالذَّهَبِ (if you lend silver in exchange for gold) of the second. It is because of this intermingling of words that our jurists have erroneously derived the concept of *ribā al-fadl* from such Ahādīth, whereas the correct concept in this regard is what the following words of the Prophet (sws) say: *إِنَّمَا الرِّبَا فِي التَّسْيِةِ* (*ribā* is only in transactions of loan).⁴⁴

It should be borne in mind that interest pertains only to those transactions in which a commodity is borrowed for the purpose of “using it up” whereby the borrower would be burdened to recreate it in order to return it to the lender. If any additional amount is demanded over and above it, then this no doubt is injustice as affirmed both by reason and revelation. On the contrary, transactions in which the commodities and items in question are “used” rather than being “used up” relate to lease, and the money demanded by the owner on providing this service, which is termed as rent, can in no way be objected to.

Similarly, it should also remain clear that whether a loan is acquired for

40. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 693, (no. 4068).

41. This directive is meant to put a stop, at the very outset, to ways which lead to the door of interest. Since dissimilar commodities are given on credit, there is all the probability of some increase or decrease in such barter transactions; the Prophet (sws) therefore prohibited them.

42. This translation is in accordance with the copulative relation of this sentence to the previous one. The words الْوَرْقُ بِالذَّهَبِ (if you lend silver in exchange for gold) in which two different commodities are mentioned entail that the wheat mentioned in this expression be of two different categories also.

43. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 692, (no. 4059).

44. Ibid., 697, (nos. 4089, 4091).

personal, business or welfare purposes, the real meaning of *ribā* is not ascertained on these bases. It is an indisputable fact that in the Arabic language the word *ribā*, irrespective of the aim of the lender and the condition of the borrower, just implies a pre-determined increase acquired on a loan. Consequently, the Qur'ān itself has clarified this fact: during its own period of revelation, lending on interest for business purposes was quite rampant and these loans were given with the intention of prospering through the wealth of others. The Qur'ān says:

وَمَا أَتَيْتُمْ مِنْ رِبَآ لِيَرُبُّوا فِي أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ فَلَا يَرُبُّوا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَتَيْتُمْ مِنْ زَكَّةً ثُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ
فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُضْعَفُونَ (٣٩:٣٩)

And that which you give as loan on interest that it may increase on [other] people's wealth, it has no increase with Allah; but that which you give as *zakāh* seeking Allah's countenance, then it is these people who shall get manifold [in the Hereafter] of what they gave. (39:39)

The expression "...that it may increase on [other] people's wealth" is not only inappropriate for application to interest-based loans given to the poor for their personal use, but is also clearly indicative of the fact that interest-based loans were generally given for business purposes and in this way they "increased on other people's wealth" according to the Qur'ān.

It is to this fact that the following verse also points:

وَإِنْ كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرْهُ إِلَى مَيْسَرَةٍ وَإِنْ تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُشِّمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٢٨٠:٢)

And if the borrower is in difficulty grant him respite until it is easy for him to repay and if you write off [the debt], it is better for you, if you only knew. (2:280)

Imām Amīn Aḥsān Islāhī comments on this verse in the following words:

Today some naive people claim that the type of interest which prevailed in Arabia before the advent of Islam was usury. The poor and the destitute had no option but to borrow money from a few rich money-lenders to fulfil their personal needs. These money-lenders exploited the poor and would lend them money at high interest rates. It is only this type of interest which the Qur'ān has termed as *ribā* and forbidden. As far as commercial interest is concerned, it neither existed at that time nor did the Qur'ān prohibit it.

The verse categorically refutes this view. When the Qur'ān says that if the borrower is in difficulty, he should be given respite until he is able to pay back his debt, it clearly points out that in those times even the rich used to acquire loans. In fact, if the style and stress of the verse are correctly understood, it becomes clear that it was mostly the rich who used to procure

loans. Indeed, there was a strong chance that the borrower would find himself in difficulty even to pay the original amount. The money-lender, therefore, is directed to give him more time and if he forgoes the original amount, it would be better for him. The words of this verse strongly indicate this meaning. The actual words of the verse are: وَإِنْ كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرْهُ إِلَى مِيسَرَةٍ. The particle of condition ان (if) is not used for general circumstances, but, in fact, is used for rare and unusual circumstances. For general circumstances, the particle (if) is used. In the light of this, it is clear that the borrowers in those times were generally the affluent (ذُو مِيسَرَةٍ), but in some cases were poor or had become poor after acquiring the loan and in that case, the Qur'ān has directed the money-lenders to give them a time rebate.⁴⁵

He has concluded this discussion by saying:

Obviously, the affluent would have turned to the money-lenders not to fulfil their personal needs, but, of course, their business needs. So what is the difference between these loans and the commercial loans of today.⁴⁶

4. Documentation and Evidence

I

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تَدَاءَتُمْ بِدِينِ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى فَأَكْتُبُوهُ وَلَا يُكْتَبْ بَيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌ بِالْعَدْلِ وَلَا يَأْبَ كَاتِبٌ أَنْ يَكْتُبَ كَمَا عَلِمَ اللَّهُ فَلَيُكْتَبْ وَلَيُمْلَلُ الدِّيْرِيْهَ عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ وَلَيُقْرَأَ اللَّهُ رَبُّهُ وَلَا يَبْخَسْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا فَإِنْ كَانَ الدِّيْرِيْهَ عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ سَفِيهًّا أَوْ ضَعِيفًّا أَوْ لَا يَسْتَطِعُ أَنْ يُمْلَلُ هُوَ فَلَيُمْلَلُ وَلَيُهُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَاسْتَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ مِنْ تَرْضُوْنَ مِنْ الشَّهَادَةِ أَنْ تَضَلِّلَ إِحْدَاهُمَا فَنَذِكِرْ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَى وَلَا يَأْبَ الشَّهَادَةِ إِذَا مَا دُعُوا وَلَا سَأْمُوا أَنْ تَكْتُبُوهُ صَغِيرًا أَوْ كَبِيرًا إِلَى أَجَلِهِ ذَلِكُمْ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأَقْوَمُ لِلشَّهَادَةِ وَأَدْنَى أَلَّا تَرْتَابُوا إِلَى أَنْ تَكُونُ تَجَارَةً حَاضِرَةً تُدِيرُونَهَا بَيْنَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَلَا تَكْتُبُوهَا وَأَشْهِدُوا إِذَا تَبَاعَتُمْ وَلَا يُضَارَ كَاتِبٌ وَلَا شَهِيدٌ وَإِنْ تَقْعُلُوا فَإِنَّهُ فُسُوقٌ بِكُمْ وَأَنْقُوا اللَّهُ وَيُعْلَمُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ وَإِنْ كُشِّمْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ وَلَمْ تَجِدُوا كَاتِبًا فَرَهَانٌ مَقْبُوضَةٌ فَإِنْ أَمِنَ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا فَلَيُؤَدَ الدِّيْرِيْهَ أَوْ تَمِّنَ أَمَانَتَهُ وَلَيُقْرَأَ اللَّهُ رَبُّهُ وَلَا تَكْنُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَنْ يَكْنُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ أَثْمٌ قَلْبُهُ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ (٢٨٣-٢٨٤:٢)

Believers! When you acquire a loan for a fixed period, record it in writing, and let a scribe write it down between you with fairness; and he who can write

45. Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 638-639.

46. Ibid., vol. 1, 639.

should not refuse to write, and just as Allah has taught him to write, he also should write for others; and the one who has acquired the loan should have [the document] written down and fearing Allah his Lord, he should not make any reduction in it. If he on whom rests the responsibility of writing is indiscreet or feeble or unable to have it written, then let his guardian do so with justice. And call in two male witnesses from among your men, but if two men cannot be found, then one man and two women from among your likable people so that if one of them gets confused, the other reminds her. And witnesses must not refuse when they are summoned. And whether the loan is big or small, be not negligent in documenting the deal up to its period. This is more just in the sight of Allah, it ensures accuracy in testifying and is the most appropriate way for you to safeguard against doubts. But if it be an everyday transaction, it does not matter if you do not write it down. And call in witnesses also if you sell or purchase anything. And let no harm be done to the scribe or the witness. And if you do so, then this will be a transgression which will cling to you. And fear Allāh and [understand that] Allah is teaching you. And He has knowledge of all things. And if you are in a journey and a scribe is not available, a loan can be taken by placing something in possession of the lender against the loan. Then when circumstances are such that people can trust one another, the lender should return the thing entrusted to him and he should keep fearing Allah his Lord [and should call in people to bear evidence on this matter], and do not conceal evidence [in whatever form it is], and [remember that] whoever conceals it, his heart will become sinful, [and remember that] God knows whatever you do. (2:282-283)

This verse directs the Muslims to document monetary transactions whether in cash or in credit to safeguard against any dispute that may arise. Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī has summarized the directives mentioned in this verse in his *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān* in the following words:

1. Whenever a loan is acquired for a certain period, the transaction should be written down in the form of a document.
2. This document should be written down in a just manner by some scribe in the presence of both the parties. He should not be fraudulent in writing this down. A person who knows how to write should not refuse if he is called upon to do so. The skill of writing is a blessing of Allah, and, in gratitude to this, a person should help others whenever the need arises. The need for this piece of advice arose because in those times very few people knew how to write. Formal and legal documentation and registration had not begun and neither was its inception an easy affair.
3. The responsibility of writing down the document rests on the borrower. The document should state the name of the person from whom he has borrowed, and like the person who has been entrusted with the responsibility of writing

down, he too should uphold the virtue of piety in this affair, and in no way try to damage the parties involved.

4. If the borrower is naïve, feeble or is not in a position to write down the document, then his guardian or attorney should have it written down on his behalf with justice and fairness.

5. Two male witnesses should testify over this document. The words used are من رجالكم (from among your men), which imply two things simultaneously: firstly, the witnesses should be Muslims and known to the parties involved. The second thing which is specified in this regard is that the witnesses should be honest and trustworthy and of sound character.

6. If two male Muslims having the said qualities are not available, then one man and two women can be selected to fulfil this responsibility. The requirement for two women is because if one of them commits an error the other may correct her. This is not because women are inferior, but because this responsibility is not very suited to their temperament and general sphere of interests and the environment they are used to. Consequently, the *shari‘ah* has given them some relief and assistance in it.

7. People who have borne witness to a document should not desist from giving their testimony when they are called upon to do so because bearing witness to a truth is a great social service also, and as witnesses to the truth, it is a responsibility of the *ummah* imposed on it by the Qur’ān.

8. If the loan, whether it be small in amount or large, is acquired for a period and is not an everyday loan, one must not show aversion to writing it down. People who ignore this by considering it a burden, sometimes get involved in severe disputes which produce far reaching results merely because of this slackness.

9. All these directives are in accordance with justice, and they safeguard testimonies and protect people from doubts and disputes. So, it is necessary to follow them for the general well-being of the society.

10. Everyday loans and transactions are not required to be written down.

11. Witnesses, however, should be called upon important deals and transactions to resolve any disputes that may arise.

12. It is not proper for a party to harm the scribe or the witness if a dispute arises. Scribes and witnesses do a great social service, and if they are harmed, honest and cautious people will start avoiding these responsibilities and, except for professional witnesses, people will have difficulty in finding

witnesses who are reliable. In present times, the reason honest and serious minded people avoid these responsibilities is that whenever some dispute arises in such an affair, the witnesses have to face a lot of trouble and discomfort. They become the targets of defamation, suffer monetary losses and even get killed. The Qur’ān has stopped people from such excesses and warned that this is not a small offence that may be forgiven. It is a transgression which will cling on to them, and they will not be able to save themselves from its evil consequences.⁴⁷

At the end of the verse, the Almighty has given His guidance on the issue of pledging something to acquire a loan. As per this guidance, if a person is on a journey and no scribe is available to document the transaction of loan, then the borrower can place something in possession of the lender as a security. However, this permission to the lender to accept such pledges is strictly dependent on the fact that the lender does not find himself in a trustworthy situation. As soon as such a situation arises, the Almighty has directed the lender to return the pledged item and call in witnesses over the transaction of loan. Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī writes:

... when circumstances arise that people can start trusting one another and the lender does not have a valid reason to distrust the borrower, he should return the pledged item and if he wants, for his own satisfaction, he can adopt the method on which he has been guided earlier in the verse. Examples of these circumstances are that his journey ends, scribes become available to document the transaction and in the presence of people known to him the loan becomes a verifiable transaction. Here the pledged items are called “a trust” from which it is evident that these items lie with the lender as a trust which he must safeguard, and it is prohibited to gain any benefit from them.⁴⁸

The nature of calling in two male witnesses and, in their absence, one male and two female witnesses though is absolutely specific; however, the way our jurists have interpreted it requires that the following two aspects be kept in consideration:

Firstly, the verse has nothing to do with the bearing of witness over an incident. It explicitly relates to testifying over a document. It is very evident that in the second case witnesses are selected by an external agency, while in the first case the presence of a witness at the site of an incidence is an accidental affair. If we have written a document or signed an agreement, then the selection of witnesses rests upon our discretion, while in the case of adultery, theft, robbery and other similar crimes whoever is present at the site must be regarded as a witness. The difference between the two cases is so pronounced that no law about one can be deduced on the basis of the other.

Secondly, the context and style of the verse is such that it cannot relate to law or the judicial forums of a state. It is not that after addressing a court of law that

47. Ibid., vol. 1, 640-642.

48. Ibid., vol. 1, 643.

it has been said that if such a law suit is presented before them by a claimant, then they should call in witnesses in this prescribed manner. On the contrary, this verse directly addresses people who borrow and lend money over a fixed period. It urges them that if they are involved in such dealings, then an agreement between the two parties must be written down, and to avoid disputes and financial losses only witnesses who are honest, reliable and morally sound should be appointed. At the same time, their personal involvement and occupations should be suited to fulfil this responsibility in a befitting manner. Precisely for this reason, Muslims are directed to primarily appoint two male witnesses and in their absence one male and two female witnesses so that if a lady used to the serene surroundings of her house finds herself overwhelmed in the hostile atmosphere of a court room, another lady is present alongside her to protect the evidence from doubt and ambiguity. The verse does not mean and should not be taken to mean that a law-suit will only stand proven in court if at least two men or one man and two women bear witness to it. It is merely a guidance for the general masses in their social affairs and counsels them to abide by it so that any dispute can be avoided. It is for their own benefit and welfare that this procedure should be undertaken. In no way should this bearing of witness be taken to mean that it is a statutory count for a testimony which a court must follow. Consequently, about all similar directives the Almighty says that this procedure is nearer to justice, protects the testimony and safeguards people from doubts.

II

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا شَهَادَةُ بَيْنَكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدُكُمُ الْمَوْتُ حِينَ الْوَصِيَّةِ اثْنَانِ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ أَوْ
آخَرَانِ مِنْ عَيْرِكُمْ إِنْ أَتْهُمْ ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاصَّابْتُكُمْ مُصِيبَةُ الْمَوْتِ تَحْبِسُونَهُمَا مِنْ بَعْدِ
الصَّلَاةِ فَيَقُسِّمَانِ بِاللَّهِ إِنْ ارْتَبَطُتْ لَا تَنْشَرِي بِهِ ثَمَنًا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ وَلَا نَكُنْ شَهَادَةَ اللَّهِ إِنَّا إِذَا
لَمْنَ الْأَثْمَينَ فَإِنْ عُشَرَ عَلَىَّ أَنَّهُمَا اسْتُحْقَقاً إِنَّمَا فَأَخْرَانِ يَقُومَانِ مَقَامَهُمَا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اسْتُحْقَقُ عَلَيْهِمْ
الْأَوْلَيَانِ فَيَقُسِّمَانِ بِاللَّهِ لَشَهَادَتِنَا أَحَقُّ مِنْ شَهَادَتِهِمَا وَمَا اعْتَدَنَا إِنَّا إِذَا لَمْنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى
أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِالشَّهَادَةِ عَلَىَّ وَجْهِهَا أَوْ يَحْكُفُوا أَنْ تُرَدَّ أَيمَانُ بَعْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْمَعُوا وَاللَّهُ لَا
يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ (١٠٦: ٥)

Believers! When death approaches someone among you, and he is making a bequest, the testimony will take place in a way that two just men from among you will act as witnesses, or if you are travelling and the calamity of death overtakes you, then two just men from outside you should discharge this responsibility. Detain them [-the two just Muslims-] after the prayer, and then if you have any doubts, they should swear by Allah: "We will not accept any price for this testimony even if some kinsman offers it, neither will we hide this testimony of Allah. If we do this, then we would be among the

sinners.” But if it becomes known that they have proved dishonest, then let two others stand forth in their place from among the people who have been deprived of their right by these two witnesses; then they should swear by Allah, saying: “Our testimony is truer than theirs and that we have not trespassed [beyond the truth] in our testimony; if we do this, then we indeed should be among the wrongdoers.” In this way, it is more likely that they will bear true witness or at least they will fear that their testimony may get refuted by that of the others. [Do this], and fear Allah and listen and [remember that] Allah never guides the evil-doers. (5:106-108)

In these verses, believers are directed about their wills and bequests with the same stress and emphasis as they are in matters of loan and other transactions. A summary of these directives is presented below:

1. If death stares a person in his face and he has to make a will regarding his wealth, then he should call in two just witnesses from among his Muslim brethren.
2. If death approaches him during a journey, and two Muslim witnesses are not available there, then as a last resort he can call in two non-Muslim witnesses.
3. If there is a possibility that those selected from among the Muslims as witnesses might show some bias to someone by altering their testimony, then as a precautionary measure, they can be held back after a congregational prayer in the mosque and be asked to swear by Allah that they will not alter their testimony for some worldly gain or in partiality of someone even if he be their close relative, and, if they do some alteration, then they will be sinners.
4. The witnesses should know that this testimony is شهادة الله (the testimony of Allah). So even if they are dishonest in the slightest way, it would mean that they are dishonest not only to their brethren but also to the Almighty.
5. In spite of this, if it comes to surface that these witnesses have shown bias to someone contrary to the will made by the deceased, then two people from among those who have become the victims of this injustice should stand up and swear that they are truer than the previous witnesses; that they have not committed any excess in this regard and that they will be wrongdoers before the eyes of Allah if they do so.
6. It is likely that after this further measure, the witnesses will not give a false testimony for they will have the fear hovering over them that if they commit any wrong, others will negate their oaths and in spite of being given preference, their oaths will be refuted.

5 . Distribution of Inheritance

I

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدُكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِنْ تَرَكَ خَيْرًا الْوَصِيَّةُ لِلَّوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَفْرَادِ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

حَقًا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ فَمَنْ بَدَلَهُ بَعْدَمَا سَمِعَهُ فَإِنَّمَا إِثْمُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يُبَدِّلُونَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ فَمَنْ خَافَ مِنْ مُوصِّي حَنَفًا أَوْ إِنَّمَا فَأَصْلَحَ بَيْنَهُمْ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٢: ١٨٢-١٨٠)

When death approaches any one of you and you are leaving behind some wealth, it is incumbent upon you to make a will in favour of your parents and relatives according to the conventions [of society]. This is an obligation imposed upon the God-fearing. Then if anyone changes the will after hearing it, then its sin shall rest on those who change it. Indeed, God hears and knows [all things]. But anyone who fears partiality or wrongdoing on the part of the person who has made the will, and he makes peace between them, then there is nothing sinful in this. For Allah is Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (2:180-182)

In these verses, Muslims are directed to make a will in favour of the parents and other relatives. This was a custom of the people of Arabia of the time of the Prophet (sws). Later, this directive was replaced by the law of inheritance stated in Sūrah Nisā' (quoted below). In this law, the Almighty Himself has ascertained the shares of the parents and kinfolk, and has called it as His own will. The reason told is that man cannot know who among his relations is near to him in benefit. These shares are absolutely clear and fixed and there is no possibility of any change in them. Consequently, the Qur'ān says:

لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ نَصِيبًا مَفْرُوضًا (٤: ٧)

From what is left by [your] parents and those nearest related, there is a share for men and from what is left by [your] parents and those nearest related there is a share for women whether small or large – a fixed share. (4:7)

In view of this, it is absolutely clear that every Muslim is now bound by this law as per the distribution of his inheritance and after its revelation he is no longer required to make a will as per the customs of the society. However, the purpose of this abrogated directive in the words of Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī was:

The directive of making a will in favour of one's parents and relatives mentioned in this verse was contingent upon the conventions of the society, and was given in the interim period when the Islamic society had not become stable enough to be given the directives which were later revealed in Sūrah Nisā'. It was revealed as a temporary directive before circumstances became conducive for detailed directives in this regard. It had two basic objectives: first, to immediately safeguard the rights of those relatives which were being usurped by influential relatives, and second to revive once again the conventions of the society in this regard which had existed in the nobility of Arabia but were engulfed in the dust of the age of ignorance (*jāhiliyyah*); this revival would

pave the way for the detailed law that was to be revealed later.⁴⁹

II (i)

يُوصِّيكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي أَوْلَادِكُمْ لِلذِّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ إِنْ كُنَّ نِسَاءً فَوْقَ الْتَّيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ ثُلَاثًا مَا تَرَكَ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا النَّصْفُ (٤:١١)

God enjoins you about your children that a boy's share is equal to that of two girls'. And, if there are only girls among the children and they are more than two, then they shall receive two-thirds of the inheritance, and, if there is only one girl, then her share is half. (4:11)

It is this directive of the *sūrah* which, in general circumstances, abrogates the verse of Sūrah Baqarah quoted before. It first of all mentions the share of the children:

The sentence (يُوصِّيكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي أَوْلَادِكُمْ) (God enjoins you about your children) acts as a prelude to (للذِّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ) ('a boy's share is equal to that of two girls'). The word اولاد (*awlād*) denotes both the female and the male offspring. Hence, the correct sentence analysis in this writer's opinion is: ([among the children] a boy's share is equal to that of two girls').

If this directive had ended on the words (للذِّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ) ('a boy's share is equal to that of two girls'), then it would have meant:

(i) If the children of a deceased are only a boy and a girl, then the boy will receive twice as much as the girl.

(ii) If the number of boys and girls exceed this, then the inheritance shall be divided among them in a manner that each boy receives twice the share of a girl.

(iii) If there are only boys or only girls, then the whole inheritance shall be given to whoever among the two is present.

The third case is also, quite evidently, an essential outcome of the style and pattern of the verse. If it is said that this money is to be distributed among beggars and a male beggar is to be given twice the amount of a female beggar, then this means nothing except that the money is actually meant for the beggars; hence if all beggars are men, all the money shall be distributed among them and if all the beggars are women, then also the same procedure shall be adopted. But the directive does not end here: an exception immediately follows, thereby amending it.

The sentence (إِنْ كُنَّ نِسَاءً فَوْقَ الْتَّيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ ثُلَاثًا مَا تَرَكَ) (and if there are only girls among the children and they are more than two, then they shall receive two-thirds of the inheritance) is an exception to (للذِّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ) ('a boy's share is equal to that of two girls'). This means that if among the children of the deceased there are girls, then whether they are two or more, their share is two-thirds.

The words (وَإِنْ كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا النَّصْفُ) (and if there is only one girl, then her share

49. Ibid., vol. 1, 439-440.

is half) are co-ordinated to this exception by the copulative particle (*harf-i 'atf*) و (and).

This writer has interpreted the meaning of فُوقَ اثْتَيْنِ as “two or more than two”. The reason behind this is that before it, the word اثْتَيْنِ (two) has been suppressed, which is owing to the style and pattern of the Arabic language. If, in the language of the Qur’ān, the share of a girl and of two or more girls are to be stated separately owing to a difference in their proportions, then there can be two ways of doing so. If an ascending order arrangement is adopted, then the share of one girl shall be stated first followed by the share of two girls. If the share of more than two girls is to be the same as that of two girls, then there is no need to mention it in words. After specifying the share of two girls after that of one, owing to a difference in their amount, if a silence follows, then this is a clear indication that the share of more than two girls is equal to that of two girls'. If a descending order arrangement is employed, then again, the words فُوقَ اثْتَيْنِ او اثْتَيْنِ (more than two or two) are inappropriate as regards the linguistic style and pattern of Arabic; so after stating the shares of more than two girls, the share of one girl will be stated. In this style and arrangement, the commencement of a sentence by فُوقَ اثْتَيْنِ bears evidence to a suppression of the word اثْتَيْنِ before it. A little deliberation shows that the verse readily suggests this fact. The order of the arrangement demands that اثْتَيْنِ should come after فُوقَ اثْتَيْنِ while linguistic considerations dictate that فُوقَ اثْتَيْنِ should come before اثْتَيْنِ. To fulfil both these requirements, the Qur’ān has suppressed the word اثْتَيْنِ by employing an ellipsis in the descending order arrangement. In the last verse of Sūrah Nisā', these shares are stated in an ascending order. Accordingly, we observe there that فُوقَ اثْتَيْنِ is suppressed after اثْتَيْنِ:

إِنْ أَمْرُّ هَلَكَ لَيْسَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَلَهُ أُخْتٌ فَلَهَا نِصْفٌ مَا تَرَكَ وَهُوَ يَرِثُهَا إِنْ ، لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهَا وَلَدٌ فَإِنْ
كَانَتَا اثْتَيْنِ فَأَهُمَا الشُّثَانُ مِمَّا تَرَكَ (٤:١٧٦)

If a man dies childless and he has only one sister, she shall inherit half of what he leaves and if a sister dies childless, then her brother shall be her heir; and if there are two sisters, they shall inherit two-thirds of what he [or she] leaves. (4:176)

II (ii)

وَالْأَبْوَيْهِ لِكُلٍّ وَاحِدٌ مِنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ مِمَّا تَرَكَ إِنْ كَانَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَوَرَثَهُ أَبُوهُهُ فَلَامِهِ
الثُّلُثُ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَهُ إِخْوَةٌ فَلَامِهِ السُّدُسُ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصِي بِهَا أَوْ دِينٍ (٤:١١)

And if the deceased has children, then the parents shall inherit a sixth each, and if he has no children and only the parents are his heirs, then his mother shall receive a third, and if he has brothers and sisters, then the mother's share is the same one-sixth after the execution of any will he may have bequeathed

and after discharging any debts he may have left behind. (4:11)

After the children, the shares of the parents are now mentioned. The copulative particle وَلَأَبْوَيْهِ لِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ مِمَّا تَرَكَ (and if the deceased has children, then the parents shall inherit a sixth each) does not co-ordinate this clause either to فَإِنْ كُنَّ نِسَاءً فَوْقَ اثْتَيْنِ (and if there are only girls among the children and they are more than two) or to وَإِنْ كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا النَّصْفُ (and if there is only one girl, then her share is half); in fact, it co-ordinates it to the whole directive above which relates to the shares of the children. Hence this co-ordination ('atf) is not copulative (*li al-jam'*), rather it is emendative (*li al-istidrāk*) in nature. The reason is that though it is clear from the words لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ (a boy's share is twice a girl's), their actual proportion has not been indicated. This linguistic style can be appreciated from an example: If it is said: "This money is for the children. Let each boy receive twice as much as a girl, and let the father receive half the amount," any person who has even a little linguistic sense will clearly understand these sentences to mean that the money is actually meant for the children. If these sentences had ended without a mention of the father's share, then all the money would have been distributed among the boys and girls in the proportion indicated. But since the father is also to be given half the amount, it is imperative that the father should first receive this amount and then what remains should be distributed among the children. The expression فَإِنْ كُنَّ نِسَاءً فَوْقَ اثْتَيْنِ (and if there are only girls among the children and they are more than two) is an exception to لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ (a boy's share is equal to that of two girls') and explains one of its aspects. If this is correct, then it cannot be taken as an independent clause like وَلَأَبْوَيْهِ... (and for the parents ...) and it cannot have a different implication than لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ (a boy's share is equal to that of two girls'). The total implied meaning can be appreciated by an example: "In this amount, 'Umar, 'Alī and Sa'īd have exactly equal shares, and if only 'Alī and Sa'īd are present, then let 'Alī receive two-thirds and Sa'īd one-third, and give ten rupees from this to their sister." A little deliberation shows that though it has been said that in the absence of 'Umar, 'Alī and Sa'īd shall receive two-thirds and one-third respectively, an amendment at the end necessitates that ten rupees from the amount should first be given to the sister, and whatever remains should be distributed between 'Alī and Sa'īd according to their shares.

The verse under discussion is also of the same style. Consequently, if this is kept in mind, then it is not at all difficult to comprehend that after the clause وَإِنْ كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا النَّصْفُ (and if there is only one girl, then her share is half), the shares of the parents and the spouses which are co-ordinated to the shares of the children by the copulative particle وَ (and) shall all necessarily be distributed first and whatever remains shall only be distributed among the children. Whether among the children, there are only boys or both boys and girls, the same principle shall apply. Similarly, if only female offspring are present, then they shall receive two-thirds or half (whatever the case may be) from the remaining inheritance and

not in any case from the total inheritance.

This is the correct meaning of the verse. Any person, who after comprehending the implications denoted by the particle وَلَدْ (and) in وَلَدْ يُوَيْهِ (and for the parents), and the particle فَإِنْ كُنَّ نِسَاءً (then if there are only girls) reads the verse, shall spontaneously reach the same conclusion.

Consider, next, the remaining part of the verse:

The word إِنْ كَانَ لَهُ وَلَدْ (if he has children) and in وَلَدْ (walad) (and if he does not have children) is used both for male and female children. In the Arabic language, this connotation is conventional and customary. This word is used here and also in the shares of the spouses. In my opinion, it has this same meaning in each of these places. Linguists maintain that it is used in the singular as well as the plural sense and, also, both for the masculine and the feminine gender (هو يقع على الواحد والجمع والذكر والأنثى). There is no contextual indication, intrinsic or extrinsic, to believe that the word has specifically been used for male children. In all the cases mentioned, whether boys and girls in the indicated numbers are present or absent, these connotations of the word shall be considered understood.

According to the linguistic principles of Arabic, after the words فَلَمَّا هُنْ ثُلُثٌ (then the mother's share is one-third) the words وَلَائِيَهُ الثُلُثَانِ (and the father's share is two-thirds) or words of similar meaning are suppressed, as is readily suggested by the words وَوَرَثَهُ أَبُوهُهُ (and his parents are his heirs). Hence, this mention is a clear proof of the suppression. When it is said: "If the heirs of this money are only Zāhid and 'Alī, then Zāhid's share is one-third", then after this there is no need to say that "the remaining two-thirds is for 'Alī" – something which is understood by all requisites of common sense.

Also, in this writer's view, after فَإِنْ كَانَ لَهُ إِخْرَجٌ فَلَامَهُ السُّدُسُ (and if he has brothers and sisters, then the mother's share is the same one-sixth) the words وَلَائِيَهُ السُّدُسُ (and the father's share is [also] one-sixth) or words of similar meaning are suppressed. The contextual indication for this is also very evident. If brothers and sisters are present, then the mother's share is the same one-sixth as in the case when a deceased has children. This also bears witness to the fact that the father's share is also the same and that there is no need to express it in words. If a reader relishes the finer aspects of a language, he instinctively concludes that if the mother's share has reverted to its original amount, so should the father's share. Thus, the correct analysis of these verses is: "If there are children, then both the father and the mother shall receive one-sixth. If there are no children and only parents are the heirs, then the mother's share is a third; but if there are brothers and sisters, then the mother's share is the same one-sixth." One can very well see how this style effectively induces the mind to spontaneously jump to the suppressed words: "and the father's share is also the same one-sixth."

It is clear from these verses that in the absence of children, brothers and sisters take their place. This view is endorsed by the last verses of the *sūrah* also, but we shall delay an explanation until these verses are discussed later in this article.

The word إخوة (ikhwatun), in this writer’s opinion, only signifies the existence of an entity. It merely specifies that in the presence of brothers and sisters regardless that they are one, two, or more in number, the parental shares revert to their original amount. Plurality here does not indicate a numerical amount, rather it only denotes the existence of an entity. To quote a Ḥamāṣī poet:⁵⁰

ياك والامر الذي ان توسعـت

مواردـه ضاقتـ عليك المصادرـ

*iyyāka wa al-amr alladhi in tawassa‘at
mawāriduhu dhāqat ‘alayka al-maṣādirū*

(Avoid entangling yourself in a matter in which if the paths that lead to it (*mawārid*) are wide, those that come out (*maṣādir*) are narrow.)

The poet has used the words موارد (*mawārid*) and مصادر (*maṣādir*). It will be outright injustice to this literary composition if it is interpreted to mean that it urges the reader to refrain from getting involved in matters whose موارد (*mawārid*) and مصادر (*maṣādir*) are, after all, three or more. The poet only intends to establish the existence of a مورـد (*mawrid*) and a مصـدر (*maṣdar*) and obviously has no intention to convey their numerical amount. There may be only one way of getting involved and withdrawing from an affair and there may be several ways to do so. Similarly, a deceased may leave behind a brother and a sister and they can also be five or ten. The word إخـوة (ikhwatun) encompasses all these different cases. To convey such meanings, a language employs this style of plurality. If it is said: “if you have children, then give these sweets to them,” no one will consider this to mean that if the addressed person has only one child, then he cannot be given the sweets, merely because the word children has been used by the speaker. Such a meaning can only be inferred by someone who, instead of appreciating a language in literary perspectives, starts analyzing it on the basis of logic and mathematical axioms.

The words من بـعـد وـصـة يـوصـي بـهـا أـو دـيـن (after the execution of any will he may have bequeathed, and after discharging any debts he may have left behind) at the end of the directive imply that if a deceased has outstanding debts to his name, then first of all they must be paid from the wealth he has left behind. After this, any will which he might have bequeathed shall be executed, and whatever remains shall be distributed among the heirs. Though the directive of discharging of debts has been stated at the end of the verse, it shall be given priority over all payments. The reason is that a person from whom money is borrowed has a rightful share in the wealth of a deceased borrower before his death, while an heir becomes a rightful shareholder in a person’s wealth only after his death. As far as

50. Abū Tammām Ḥabīb ibn Aws al-Tā’ī, *Dīwān al-ḥamāṣah*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-qalam, n.d.), 20.

the precedence of the execution of any bequeathed will in the actual statement of the verse is concerned, it owes much to a touch of elegance in presentation – a distinctive feature of Qur’ānic Arabic.

II (iii)

آباؤكُمْ وَأَبْناؤكُمْ لَا تَدْرُونَ أَيْهُمْ أَقْرَبُ لَكُمْ نِفَاعًا فَرِيضَةً مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْهَا حَكِيمًا (٤:١١)

You know not who among your children and parents are nearest to you in benefit. This is the law of God. Indeed, God is Wise and All-Knowing. (4:11)

The reason why this part of the verse is juxtaposed between the ones which state the shares of the heirs is that it should become clear to people that since the Almighty Himself has indicated who the heirs of a deceased should be a more just law in this regard could not have been enacted. Hence, after this Divine Directive, in general circumstances, no one has the right to bequeath his wealth in favour of the heirs designated by the Almighty Himself. This distribution is based on the immense knowledge and wisdom of Allah, which encompass all His directives. Man, in spite of his formidable talents, can neither acquire the vastness of His knowledge nor comprehend the profundity of His wisdom. If he is a true believer, he must submit to the Word of God.

However, this does not mean that a bequest or will cannot be made in favour of an heir because of some need he have or because he has been of some service to the deceased or because of any similar reason. The “benefit” which the verse mentions as being variable is the benefit which a person has in his capacity of being a relative to the deceased. It does not relate to the needs and benefits which are known to us or can be determined by us. Thus such a bequest can be made; however, a Muslim must not dare make a bequest in favour of an heir on the basis of the latter’s familial association with him because this bequest will alter the shares prescribed by God for the heirs. The words من بعده وصيحة (after execution of any will) which repeatedly occur in these verses imply the will which is made in favour of non-heirs or are in the favour of the heirs themselves if they are in some need or have done some service to the deceased.

This is the real meaning of the verse. However, a little deliberation shows that the right to obtain an inheritance is based on the underlying cause of أقرب نفعا (the closest in benefit), and the reason for the difference in the share of the heirs is also because their benefit for the deceased varies. Everyone knows that a large part of the benefit of a girl after her marriage is transferred to her husband, similarly, a wife gives companionship to her husband whereas the husband not only gives companionship to her, he is also responsible to provide for her, hence the share of a boy is twice of a girl and the share of a husband is twice that of a wife. This benefit is by nature present in parents, children, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives and other close relations. Hence, in normal circumstances, they will be considered the heirs to the legacy of a deceased. However, if any of these relations instead of being of benefit to the deceased become an embodiment of

harm for him, then, on the basis of the underlying reason of “closest in benefit” stated by the Almighty in these verses, such a relative shall be not be regarded eligible to become an heir to the legacy. In view of this, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said about the Idolaters and the People of the Book of Arabia:

لَا يَرِثُ الْمُسْلِمُ الْكَافِرَ وَلَا الْكَافِرُ الْمُسْلِمَ

A Muslim cannot be an heir of a *kāfir* nor can a *kāfir* be a Muslim’s.⁵¹

In other words, after these disbelievers were left with no excuse to deny the truth which had been unveiled to them in its ultimate form, their enmity and hostility became very clear. Consequently, the benefit of kinship between them and the Muslims stood completely severed. Hence, they could not inherit from one another.

A secondary guidance which is also obtained from this verse is that if in certain cases legacies are left over after distribution and the deceased has not made anyone an heir in them, then they too should be distributed to the أَقْرَبُ نَعْوًا (the closest in benefit). This is precisely what the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

أَلْحِقُوا الْفَرَائِضَ بِأَهْلِهَا فَمَا تَرَكَتِ الْفَرَائِضُ فَلَأُولَئِكَ رَجُلٌ ذَكَرٌ.

Give the heirs their share and if something remains, it is for the closest male [relative].⁵²

II (iv)

وَلَكُمْ نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ أَزْوَاجُكُمْ إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَلَكُمُ الْرُّبْعُ مِمَّا تَرَكُنَ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصِينَ بِهَا أَوْ دِيْنٍ وَلَهُنَّ الرُّبْعُ مِمَّا تَرَكُتُمْ إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ فَلَهُنَّ الشُّتُّونَ مِمَّا تَرَكُتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ تُوْصُونَ بِهَا أَوْ دِيْنٍ (٤:١٢)

And to you belongs a half of what your wives leave, if they die childless. And if they have children, a quarter of what they leave shall be yours after execution of any will they may have bequeathed and after discharging any [outstanding] debts. And your wives shall inherit a quarter of what you leave, if you die childless. And if you have children, then they shall inherit one-eighth, after execution of any will you may have bequeathed, and after discharging any of your [outstanding] debts. (4:12)

These are the shares of the spouses. They are very clearly stated and need no explanation. After the payment of debts and execution of any bequeathed will, like those of the parents these shares shall also be given from the total remaining inheritance of a deceased.

51. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1167, (no. 6764).

52. Ibid., 1164, (no. 6746).

II (v)

وَإِنْ كَانَ رَجُلٌ يُورَثُ كَلَالَةً أَوْ امْرَأَةٌ وَلَهُ أَخٌ أَوْ أُخْتٌ فَلَكُلُّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ فَإِنْ كَانُوا أَكْثَرُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ فِي الْثُلُثِ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصَىَ بِهَا أَوْ دِينٍ غَيْرِ مُضَارٍ وَصِيَّةٍ مِنْ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلَيْمٌ حَلِيمٌ (٤:١٢)

And if a man or a woman is made an heir on account of his [or her] *kalālah* relationship [with the deceased] and he [or she] has one brother or sister, then the brother or sister shall receive a sixth, and if they be more than this, then they shall be sharers in one-third, after the execution of any will bequeathed and any [outstanding] debts – without harming anyone. This is a command from God, and God is Gracious and All-Knowing. (4:12)

After stating the shares of the children, the parents and the spouses, the shares of other relatives are stated. The most important word in this verse is *kalālah*. Originally, it is a مصدر (verbal noun) in the meaning of *kalāl* ie. “feebleness and frailty”. To quote a line from A‘shā’s poetry:⁵³

فَآلَيْتُ لَا أَرْثَى لَهَا مِنْ كَلَالَةٍ
fa ālaytu lā arthā lahā min kalālatiñ

(Then I swore that I shall not show any mercy on her because of her feebleness and frailty.)

Mutammim ibn Nuwayrah says:⁵⁴

فَكَانَهَا بَعْدَ الْكَلَالَةِ وَالسُّرَى
عَلَجَ تَغَالِيهِ قَذُورٌ مَلْمَعٌ
faka’annahā ba’da al-kalālati wa al-surā
‘iljun tughālīhi qadhbūrun mulmi’ū

(That [she] camel after the night’s tiring journey is indeed like a wild ass whom even a pregnant donkey tries to overtake.)

Figuratively, linguists attribute the following three meanings to this word:

- i) A person who leaves behind neither parents nor children.
- ii) Any relationship which is not through the parents or children.
- iii) All of one’s relatives except the parents and children.

53. Abū Zayd al-Qurashī, *Jamhurah ash‘ar al-‘arab*, 55.

54. Al-Zubaydī, *Tāj al-‘arūs*, vol. 22, 70.

Al-Zamakhsharī writes in his *al-Kashshāf*:

يطلق على ثلاثة على من لم يخلف ولداً ولا والدًا، وعلى من ليس بولد ولا والد من المخلفين، وعلى القرابة من غير جهة الولد والوالد. ومنه قوله: ما ورث الحمد عن كالالة، كما تقول: ما صمت عن عيّ، وما كف عن جبن. والكالالة في الأصل: مصدر بمعنى الكلال، وهو ذهاب القوّة من الإعباء. قال الأعشى: فَآلِيتْ لَا إِرْثَى لَهَا مِنْ كَالَّاَلَةٍ⁵⁵ فاستعيرت للقرابة من غير جهة الولد والوالد، لأنها بالإضافة إلى قرابتها كالة ضعيفة، وإذا جعل صفة للموروث أو الوارث فبمعنى ذي كالالة. كما تقول: فلان من قرابتي، تريد من ذوي قرابتي. ويجوز أن تكون صفة كالهجاجة والفقافة للأحق.

كالالة (*kalālah*) has three meanings: It is an adjective used for a person who leaves behind neither parents nor children; it also means all the relatives of a deceased except his parents and children, and it also denotes the relationships which are not through [the deceased's] parents or children. The Arabs say: ما ماصمت عن عيّ (*mā warith al-majda ‘an kalālatiñ*: he did not become an heir to nobility because of a distant relationship). Likewise, you say: ما صمت عن جبن (*mā ṣamata ‘an ‘ayyin*: he did not become quiet because he was unable to speak and *kaffa*) (*mā kaffa ‘an jubnīñ*: he did not stop because of cowardice). And كالالة (*kalālah*) is a *maṣdar* (verbal noun) meaning *kalāl*. (*kalāl*) means loss of strength because of weakness. A ‘shā says: فَآلِيتْ لَا إِرْثَى لَهَا مِنْ كَالَّاَلَةٍ (*fa ālaytu lā arthī lahā min kalālatiñ*: then I swore that I shall not show any mercy on her because of her feebleness and frailty). Later, it was figuratively used for the relationship which is not through the parents and children. The reason for this being that such a relationship is not as strong as the one through the parents and children. And when it is used as an adjective of a legatee or a legator it means ذو كالالة (*dhū kalālah*). Similarly, you say فلان من ذوي قرابتي (*fulānuñ min qarābatī*) ie. (*fulānuñ min dhawī qarābatī*), and it can also be an adjective like هجاجة (*hajājah*) and فقافة (*faqāqah*) meaning “foolish”.⁵⁵

This writer could not find the word used in the first meaning, ie “a person who does not leave behind either parents or children” in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry though this usage is grammatically correct.

It is used at many instances in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry in the second meaning, ie. the relationship not through the parents or the children.

To quote Tirmāh:⁵⁶

55. Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 1, 485.

56. Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *Asās al-balāghah* (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1979), 550.

يَهْزِ سَلَاحًا لَمْ يُرِثْهُ كَلَالَةً

يَشْكُ بِهِ مِنْهَا غَمْوُضُ الْمَغَابِنِ

*yahuzzu silāhan lam yarith hu kalālatañ
yashukku bihi minhā ghumūda al-maghābinī*

(He waves his weapon which he did not inherit because of a distant relationship. Through it, he pierces the part concealed in her thighs.)

‘Āmir ibn Tufayl says:⁵⁷

وَمَا سُودَتِنِي عَامِرٌ عَنْ كَلَالَةٍ

wa mā sawwadatnī ‘āmirun ‘an kalālatin

(And the tribe of ‘Āmir did not make me the chief because of a distant relationship.)

According to *Lisān al-‘arab*:

وَالْعَرَبُ تَقُولُ: لَمْ يُرِثْهُ كَلَالَةً إِي لَمْ يُرِثْهُ عَنْ عَرْضٍ بَلْ عَنْ قَرْبٍ وَاسْتِحْقَاقٍ

The Arabs say: لَمْ يُرِثْهُ كَلَالَةً (*lam yarith hu kalālatañ*), ie. he did not become an heir owing to a distant relation, rather he inherited the legacy because of nearness and entitlement to it.⁵⁸

The third meaning attributed to it, ie all relatives of a person except his parents and children is also verified by many examples in pre-Islamic Arabic literature.

A Ḥamāsī poet, Yazīd ibn al-Ḥakam, while admonishing his son says:⁵⁹

وَالْمَرءُ يَخْلُ بالْحُقُوقِ

قُولَّ الْكَلَالَةِ مَا يُسِيمُ

*wa al-mar'u yabkhalu bi al-huqūq
qi wa li al-kalālati mā yusīm*

(Man shows miserliness in fulfilling the rights imposed on him and after his death, his distant relatives take away his cattle which graze in the forests.)

Azharī, has quoted a poet's couplet:⁶⁰

57. Al-Zubaydī, *Tāj al-‘arūs*, vol. 30, 244.

58. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, vol. 11, 592.

59. Abū Tammām, *Dīwān al-ḥamāsah*, vol. 2, 48.

60. Al-Zubaydī, *Tāj al-‘arūs*, vol. 30, 343.

فان ابا المرء أحمى له
ومولى الكلاله لا يغضب
*fa inna abā al-mar'i ahmā lahū
wa mawlā al-kalālati lā yaghdabū*

(If a person is oppressed and persecuted, it is his father who, in his support, is infuriated the most. *Kalālah* relatives are not infuriated to this extent in such a matter.)

To quote a Bedouin:

مالي كثير و يرثني كلاله متراخ نسبهم
I have a lot of wealth and my heirs are distant relatives.⁶¹

Imām Muslim has quoted the following words in a Ḥadīth narrated by Jābir (rta):

يا رسول الله ، إنما يرثني كلاله
O Prophet of Allah ! Only *kalālah* are my heirs.⁶²

Many narratives quoted in *tafsīr* works endorse this meaning. Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ writes in his *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*:

وروى عن أبي بكر الصديق وعلى وابن عباس في أحدي الروايتين ان الكلاله ماعدا الوالد والولد ،
وروى محمد بن سالم عن الشعبي عن ابن مسعود انه قال : الكلاله ما خلا الوالد والولد ، وعن
زيد بن ثابت مثله

It is narrated from Abū Bakr and ‘Alī that all except the father and the children are (*kalālah*). There are two narrations from Ibn ‘Abbās in this regard: one of them says that all except the father and the children are (*kalālah*) and Muḥammad ibn Sālim reports from al-Sha‘bī, who reports from Ibn Mas‘ūd that all except the father and the children are (*kalālah*) and Zayd ibn Thābit has also reported this meaning.⁶³

Now, let us consider the verse under discussion. Though our jurists have unanimously preferred the first meaning here, yet the verse itself testifies against

61. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, vol. 11, 592.

62. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 706, (no. 4148).

63. Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 2, 87.

بُو صِيكْمْ this meaning. If we carefully analyze verses 11 and 12 of Sūrah Nisā' from (God enjoins you about your children), it is observed that after a mention of the shares of the children and the parents, the Almighty has directed us to carry out the distribution of legacy by the words (after the execution of any will he may have bequeathed and after discharging any debts he may have left behind). The directive is repeated in the shares of the spouses: منْ بَعْدَ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصِي بِهَا أَوْ دِينٍ (after the execution of any will he may have bequeathed and after discharging any debts he may have left behind). A little contemplation shows that in all these instances the verb is used in the active voice (*ma'rūf*) and the antecedents of (yūṣīt) (yūṣīnā) and (tūṣīnā) are clearly stated in each of these sentences. But in the verse of (kalālah), the verb is used in the passive voice (*majhūl*). This departure tells us that the subject (*fā'il*) of the verb (yūṣā) ie. the legator in this verse is not stated. Therefore, in this verse, the word (kalālah) cannot be regarded as an adjective for the deceased. The change conclusively testifies that the Qur'ān has not used the word in its first meaning, ie a person who does not leave behind either parents or children.

As far as the second and third meanings are concerned, any of the two can be preferred on the basis of a more delicate grammatical construction, because in both cases the implied meaning remains the same. Hence in this verse the verb (yūrāth), in the opinion of this writer, is from the *if'āl* category used in its passive form and (kalālah) is مفعول له (*maf'ūl lahū*: an accusative on account of which something is done). (kāna) here is ناقصه (nāqışah: modal auxiliary) and (yūrāthu) is بورث (yūrāthu) is its خير (*khabar*: inchoative). رجل او امرأة (*rajulun aw imra'atun*) are the اسماء (asmā': nouns) of (kāna). Keeping in mind this analysis of the verse, it can be translated thus: "and if a man or a woman is made an heir because of his (or her) *kalālah* relationship..."

Naturally, only the deceased person will have the right to make someone his heir. The meaning of the passive verb (yūrāthu) in this context can only be that an heir is made in the absence of the heirs whose shares are mentioned above.

وَلَهُ أَخٌ أَوْ أُخْتٌ فَكُلُّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمَا السُّلْسُلُ فَإِنْ كَانُوا أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَهُمْ شُرَكَاءٌ فِي الْثُلُثِ مِنْ بَعْدَ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصِي بِهَا أَوْ دِينٍ (if a man or a woman from the associations of a single relationship is made an heir and has one brother or one sister, then he (or she) will be given one-sixth of what the heir himself receives and if the heir has more than one brother or sister, then they shall share equally in a third of what the heir himself receives, after all outstanding debts are paid off and the will he may have made is executed). After this, there remains no need to say that the remaining five-sixths or two-thirds (whatever might be the case) shall be given to the person whom the deceased had made his heir. If it is said: "Ahmad has made your son the heir of his wealth, but if he has a brother then the brother shall be entitled to a third of his share," it clearly means that after the brother receives his share, the remaining money should be given to the son who has actually been made the heir.

This directive of the Qur'ān has a very sound reason behind it. Naturally, a deceased can choose to make any brother, sister, aunt or uncle (the *kalālah*

relatives) his heir. But there can be other brothers or uncles besides the one who has been made an heir by a deceased. The case is no different for sisters or aunts also. A person can prefer any uncle or aunt. But the Almighty does not approve of totally depriving all other associations of the same relationship of any share. Therefore, if a person, for example, has made one of his paternal uncles, Zāhid, the heir to his remaining estate in the presence of two other paternal uncles, then the two shall share equally in a third of what Zāhid receives, and Zāhid himself shall receive the remaining two-thirds.

Consider now the remaining part of the verse. The words of the Qur’ān are: ﴿عَيْرَ مُضَارٌ وَصَيْغَةٌ مِنْ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلَيْمٌ حَلِيمٌ﴾. These words at the end of the verse serve as a warning that making someone an heir should not be a source of harm for any of the rightful heirs. To dispel any element of foul play, the Almighty Himself has fixed the shares of the real heirs. Since, according to the verse, a person can make any of his (kalālah) relatives his heir, it is emphatically stated that, while exercising this prerogative, the rights of a rightful heir should not be usurped – this is not a piece of advice from an earthling. It is what the Creator of the heavens and the earth has directed us about. If any of His creation deliberately deprives a rightful claimant from his share, then he should be aware that God has knowledge of all his deeds, and, if he errs unintentionally, the Almighty is Gracious and Merciful. He does not burden a person with a responsibility he cannot fulfil. All His directives bring ease and facility for His creation and are not meant to put them through hardship and difficulty.

II (vi)

يَسْتَفْتُوكُمْ قُلْ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِي الْكَلَالَةِ إِنْ امْرُؤٌ هَلَكَ لَا يُسَرِّ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَلَهُ أُخْتٌ فَلَهَا نَصْفٌ مَا تَرَكَ
وَهُوَ بِرِثْتُهَا إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهَا وَلَدٌ فَإِنْ كَانَتَا اثْتَنَيْنِ فَلَهُمَا الشَّانِثُانِ مِمَّا تَرَكَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا إِحْوَةً رِجَالًا
وَنِسَاءً فَلَلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأَنْثَيْنِ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَصِلُوا وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلَيْمٌ (٤:١٧٦)

People ask your pronouncement. Say: “God enjoins you about your *kalālah* heirs that if a man dies childless and he has only a sister, then she shall inherit half of what he leaves and if a sister dies childless, then her brother shall be her heir; and if there are two sisters, then they shall inherit two-thirds of what he [or she] leaves. If there are many brothers and sisters, then the share of each male shall be that of two females.” God expounds unto you that you err not and God has knowledge of all things. (4:176)

Since, according to the interpretation given above, all brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts are (kalālah) relatives and a person can make anyone of them his heir, it is possible that he might prefer an aunt or an uncle over his brothers and sisters. This would not be appropriate because after one’s children, one’s brothers and sisters are nearest to him. Sense and reason demand that in such a case they should receive a large portion of the legacy. Verses 11-12 of Sūrah Nisā’ clearly state that

if a deceased has brothers and sisters, then the parents shall receive a sixth each. Since this share is the same as what they receive in the presence of children, the question arises whether it has still been left to a person to make the brothers and sisters his heirs, or can he deprive them of a share in his wealth. While explaining verses 11-12 of Sūrah Nisā’, it was written that the style of the verses is such that in the absence of children, the brothers and sisters of a deceased should be his heirs. But obviously, the meaning unfolded by a particular style cannot be as certain and definite as the one which is directly stated in words. In the absence of children, the question about the shares of brothers and sisters can even arise today. It had arisen in the time of the Prophet (sws) as well. Jabīr (rta) reports:

يَقُولُ جَاءَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَعْوَذُنِي وَأَنَا مَرِيضٌ لَا أَعْقُلُ فَتَوَضَّأَ وَصَبَّ عَلَيَّ مِنْ وَضُوئِهِ فَعَقَلْتُ فَقُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ لِمَنِ الْمِيرَاثُ إِنَّمَا يَرِثُنِي كَلَالَةٌ فَنَرَكَتْ آيَةُ الْفَرَائِصِ.

He said: “I was sick and in a state of unconsciousness when the Prophet of Allah arrived at my place to see me. He did the ablution and sprinkled some water over me from which he was doing his ablution. When I came to my senses, I said: ‘O Prophet of Allāh! Who will receive my legacy; all my heirs are *kalālah*.’ At this, this verse⁶⁴ of inheritance was revealed.”⁶⁵

From the words: “O Prophet of Allah all my heirs are *kalālah*. At this, this verse of inheritance was revealed,” of the above Ḥadīth, it is evident that among the *kalālah* (relatives) the question particularly concerned his brothers and sisters and the last verses of Sūrah Nisā’ were revealed as a result of this inquiry.

A special style of the Qur’ānic verses is that in them certain questions are stated in a very concise and compact form. The actual nature of the question and its background is revealed by the answer which the verses subsequently give. By not taking into consideration this style, our commentators have come across many difficulties in understanding قُلْ اللَّهُ يُنْهِيْكُمْ فِي الْكَلَالَةِ (God enjoins you about your *kalālah* relatives). Here also, if only the answer is analyzed, the meanings the verse conveys are very evident. The verse is of the same style and pattern as يُوصِّيْكُمْ اللَّهُ فِي أُوْلَادِكُمْ (God enjoins you about your children). In the latter case, the directive is about the children as the heirs of a deceased while in the former case, the pronouncement is about *kalālah* relatives as the heirs of a deceased. The article ال (alif lām) defines the word *kalālah* in this verse, which testifies to the fact that the question concerns some specific relations among the *kalālah* relatives and the answer shows that these specific relations are the deceased’s brothers and sisters. Verse 12 of Sūrah Nisā’ has already empowered a person to

64. It has been explained in a Ḥadīth (Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 706, (no. 4148)) that by “this verse of inheritance” is meant the last verse of Sūrah Nisā’ in which the shares of the brothers and sisters are stated. Likewise, another Ḥadīth (Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1164, (no. 6743)) clearly mentions that Jābir (rta) had only sisters among his heirs.

65. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 38, (no. 194).

bequeath a part of his legacy in favour of relatives like uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters. Here, a particular case is mentioned after the general directive. Considering this, the correct meaning of the verse is: “Say, Allah gives you a pronouncement about brothers and sisters among the *kalālah* relatives.” An example of this Qur’ānic style and construction can be seen in verse 189 of Sūrah Baqarah.⁶⁶

It should be clear that the words (إِنْ أَمْرُوا هَلَكَ لَيْسَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ) (if a man dies childless...) do not state the meaning of *kalālah*; they merely impose a condition which must be fulfilled if the brothers and sisters are to receive a share in a legacy. Just as in the verse (فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَوَرَثَهُ أَبُوهُهُ) (and if he does not have children, and his parents are his heirs), a condition is imposed that if the deceased is childless and only his parents are his heirs, then they shall receive such and such shares. Similarly, in the given verse, a condition is stated that if a person dies childless, and he has brothers and sisters, then their share is such and such. Also evident from the condition in the verse is that brothers and sisters are heirs of a deceased, only in case he dies childless. If he leaves children, then they do not have any share in his wealth except if a deceased makes a bequest in their favour according to the general directive mentioned in verse 12 of Sūrah Nisā’.

The shares of brothers and sisters stated here are the same as those of the children stated earlier. Also, the style in مُثُلْ حَظِّ رَجُلٍ وَنِسَاءٍ فَلَذَّكَ مُثُلُ حَظِّ اَنْتَيْنِ (and if there are many brothers and sisters, then the share of each male shall be equal to that of two females') bears witness to the fact that these shares also shall be given after the parents and the spouses are handed over their shares. The relevant arguments are presented in the section which deals with the shares of the children. Hence, if the deceased only has sisters, then two-thirds or one half (whatever the case may be) of the share meant for the brothers and sisters shall be given to the sister or sisters.

We have indicated earlier that it is evident from verses 11 and 12 of Sūrah Nisā’ that in the absence of children, the brothers and sisters of a deceased take their place. This particular verse of Sūrah Nisā’ conclusively proves the premise. It was possible to misinterpret it from the style of verses 11-12, but here all doubts have been removed as to what the words imply. The Qur’ān, therefore, says: (يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَضْلُوا وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ) (God explains to you that you err not and God has knowledge of all things, (4:176)).

66. See: Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 1, 471.

The Sharī‘ah of Preaching

An important requirement of religion is that its followers should also continue to urge others to adopt and adhere to it. It is this requirement of religion for which the terms *da‘wah* (preaching) and *tablīgh* (propagation) are used. We Muslims have always been aware that the radiance of faith and good deeds that we have been blessed with entails that we must also enlighten others about it. It is because of this importance of preaching and propagation that the Almighty has revealed a detailed *sharī‘ah* about it just as He has done so in spheres such as politics, economics and worship besides some others. A study of this *sharī‘ah* shows that the responsibility of preaching has been imposed in distinct categories on the believers according to their various capacities.

For convenience of understanding, the *sharī‘ah* of preaching can be categorized as follows:

- i. Preaching Obligation of Prophets
- ii. Preaching Obligation of Abraham’s Progeny
- iii. Preaching Obligation of the Scholars
- iv. Preaching Obligation of the Rulers
- v. Preaching Obligation of an Individual
- vi. Strategy of Preaching

In the following pages, the *sharī‘ah* of preaching described in the Qur’ān is detailed out below:

1. Preaching Obligation of Prophets

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَذَيْرًا وَدَاعِيًّا إِلَى اللَّهِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَسِرَاجًا مُنِيرًا (٣٣: ٤٥ - ٤٦)

O Prophet! We have sent you forth as a witness, a bearer of good tidings, and a warner and as one who shall call men to God by His leave and as a shining lamp for the guidance [of mankind.] (33:45-46)

The above verses refer to the preaching responsibility of the Prophet Muhammad (sws). It is evident from the Qur’ān that all prophets of God were sent to call people to God and to warn and to give glad tidings to them. The

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَعَثَ اللَّهُ الْأَنْبِيَّإِنَّ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ^١ (٢١٣:٢) also mention this very fact. From among these *anbiyā'* (prophets), those who were given the status of *rusul* (messengers), their *indhār* (warning) culminated in *shahādah*. In the terminology of the Qur'ān, *shahādah* means that the truth is communicated to people in such a manner that no one is left with an excuse to deny it. The Qur'ānic words used are: لَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرِّسُولِ (٤:١٦٥) (so that mankind after the coming of these messengers is left with no excuse against the Almighty, (4:165)). The way this *shahādah* is established is that the Almighty selects these *rusul* and then, before the actual Day of reward and punishment, rewards and punishes in this very world people to whom the *rusul* are sent. People are told that if they honour their covenant with God, they will be rewarded in this world and if they dishonour it, they will be punished here. The result of this is that these *rusul* become signs of God, and it is as if people see God walking along with the *rusul* who deliver His verdicts. Moreover, these *rusul* are directed to propagate the truth and deliver to people the exact guidance of God they have received. This is *shahādah*, and when it is established on this earth, it becomes a basis for God to deliver His Judgement both in this world and in that to come. Consequently, the Almighty grants dominance to these *rusul* and punishes those who reject them. The word شَاهِدًا (*shāhidan*) used in the above quoted verses of Sūrah Ahzāb delineates this very status of the Prophet Muhammad (sws).

Delivering of warnings and glad tidings by *anbiyā'* (prophets) does not require any explanation. However, when *rusul*² (messengers) deliver these warnings and glad tidings, then this requires some elaboration because these *rusul* must also fulfil the responsibility of *shahādah*. As a result of this responsibility, there are certain phases of their preaching endeavour. And there are certain consequences of these phases which are peculiar to the *rusul* only. This preaching is not related to any other person except the *rusul*.

In the following paragraphs, these phases are elaborated upon.

i. Indhār (Warning)

This is the first phase of preaching of the *rusul*. *Indhār* means to warn someone of the evil consequences of something. It is evident from the Qur'ān that the *rusul* of God always warn their people of two punishments: the punishment which those who reject these *rusul* will face in the Hereafter, and the punishment which they will face in this very world for this very reason. These *rusul* inform their people that they have been sent in this world to set up a miniature Day of Judgement. Once they have communicated the truth to their addressees in a manner that they are left with no excuse to deny it, they will have to face punishment in this very world. Sūrah Qamar, which belongs to the sixth group of Qur'ānic *sūrahs*, is the

1. Mankind was once one community. [Then differences surfaced between them]. So God sent forth prophets as bearers of glad tidings and as warners. (2:213)

2. *Rusul* are a higher cadre among the *anbiyā'*. (Translator)

best example of this *indhār*. Here, after indicating His practice about *rusul* of Allah and their people, the Almighty has warned: أَكْفَارُكُمْ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أُولَئِكُمْ أَمْ لَكُمْ بِرَاءَةٌ فِي الرُّسُلِ (٤٣:٥٤) (Are your disbelievers better men than these? Or are you given immunity in the Scriptures? (54:43)). It is evident from the coherence and arrangement of the Qur'ān that in the last group of the Qur'ān, the six *sūrahs* from Sūrah Mulk (67) to Sūrah Jinn (72) belong to this phase of preaching. A study of these *sūrahs* reveals the tone, style and arguments messengers of God adopt in this phase. In Sūrah Qalam, after mentioning the parable of the people of the orchard, while summing up this *indhār*, the Qur'ān says:

كَذَلِكَ الْعَذَابُ وَكَذَلِكَ الْأَحْرَةُ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ (٦٨: ٣٣)

[People of Makkah! You are denying this *rasūl*. So take heed] in such a way shall the punishment come, and the punishment of the Hereafter shall be much greater than this if they only knew. (68:33)

Since the consequences of this *indhār* have to materialize in this world, hence its addressees are primarily people who wield influence in some form or another. These are the people whose character and conduct the masses follow; their well-being or health is instrumental in keeping others well or healthy; if their intellect is convinced of a certain ideology, it becomes a source for convincing others of this ideology; their material means and resources increase the power wielded by the truth; their mental ability can inspire the intellect of the masses and stir their souls in favour of the message they preach. Such is the influence they exercise that unless the masses are able to see that these people have been intellectually defeated, and their philosophies have been uprooted from their base through sound reasoning and the edifice of their systems of morality and politics is publicly brought down, the masses would not be fully devoted to and convinced of the cause of the right message; they would not be able to get out of the whirlpool of their previous views and relieve themselves of indecision; they would also not be able to feel elevated while following the message of truth – the elevation which is necessary to induce in them the courage and strength to break the shackles and hold of the dominant elements of the society that have spun a strong web of influence.

The way this characteristic of *indhār* becomes evident from the Qur'ān is explained thus by Imām Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī:

... Abraham (sws) at the very outset called to the truth his family and clan who held the reins of religious leadership. He then called to the truth the king who had the reins of political authority and who thought that he had power over the life and death of his people ... The Almighty had directed Moses (sws) to first of all address the Pharaoh ... Jesus (sws) first called upon the scholars of the Jews. Similarly, the preaching endeavours of the Prophets Noah (sws), Hūd (sws) and Shāliḥ (sws) are all mentioned in the Qur'ān. All these prophets began their preaching by calling upon the people who were in

authority in their times. They tried to wake up those in authority and the arrogant people of their times from their deep slumber and vehemently criticized their views. Finally, Muhammad (sws) was sent and asked to warn his immediate relatives. These relatives were the religious and political leaders of the patriarchal polity of Arabia and with this reference morally and politically guided all the people of Arabia.³

The Almighty says:

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِتُنذِرَ أُمَّةَ الْقُرْبَى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَتُنذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ لَا رَبِّ فِيهِ فَرِيقٌ
فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيقٌ فِي السَّعِيرِ (٧:٤٢)

And in a similar manner have We revealed to you an Arabic Qur'ān that you may warn the central-city and those who dwell around it and warn them of the day which is sure to come: when one group will go to Paradise and another to Hell. (42:7)

ii. Indhār-i 'Ām (Open Warning)

This is the second phase of the preaching of a *rasūl*. There is no difference between this phase and the previous one except that in the first preaching is done individually and on a person-to-person basis or in certain select gatherings. However, in this second phase, the Almighty directs His *rusul* to deliver open warning through whatever means they can use, and whatever extent they can go to, they should in order to openly preach among people. In the preaching endeavours of the *rusul*, this phase is very tough. The Qur'ān has informed us that when this phase came during the preaching of Muhammad (sws), he was told to stand in prayer at night in order to prepare for the hardships of this phase. It was in this phase that Sūrah Muzzammil was revealed. In this *sūrah*, he was directed by the Almighty to recite the Qur'ān in a measured tone in the night prayer of *tahajjud*. He was asked to remember the Almighty in his heart while being fully aware of His attributes and to glorify and praise Him with his tongue as much as he could, and in the loneliness of night fully devote himself to God. The Almighty informed Him the reason for all these directives by saying: إِنَّا سَلَّطْنَا عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا (٥٧:٧٣) (because soon We shall lay on you the burden of a heavy word, (73:5)). Consequently, in the next *sūrah*, this burden was laid on him:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُدْرِرُ قُمْ فَأَنذِرْ وَرَبِّكَ كَبِيرٌ وَثِيَابَكَ فَطَهِّرْ وَالرُّحْزَ فَاهْجُرْ وَلَا تَمْنَنْ تَسْكُنْشِرْ وَلِرَبِّكَ
فَاصْبِرْ (١: ٧٤)

O ye enfolded in your shawl! Arise and give open warning and proclaim the greatness of your Lord only, and cleanse the apparel of your soul and keep

3. Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī, *Da'wat-i dīn awr us ka ṭarīqah-i kār*, 2nd ed. (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1989), 50.

away from [this] dirt [of polytheism] and [listen!] Do not discontinue your endeavour regarding it to be enough, and with perseverance wait for the decision of your Lord. (74:1-7)

In this phase too, the *rusul* address the leaders and rulers of the society; however, since this is done at an intense pace, it also elicits a great reaction – something which is not evident in the first phase. Since those who took lead in professing faith in Muḥammad (sws) were generally the youth, the reaction experienced was from their relatives and associates. The leaders of the society reacted once they saw that Muḥammad (sws) was becoming influential in the society. Then what they did, and what Muḥammad (sws) was directed to do in response is mentioned in the *sūrah*s which were revealed in this phase. The following two passages from Sūrah Yūnus give us some idea of this:

وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا يَبْغُونَ لِقَاءً نَّا اُتْبِعْ بِقُرْآنٍ غَيْرِ هَذَا أَوْ بَدْلَهُ فُلْ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أُبَدِّلَهُ مِنْ تِلْقَاءِ نَفْسِي إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٥:١٠)

And when Our clear revelations are recited to them, those who have no hope of meeting Us say [to you]: “Give us a different Qur’ān, or change it a little.” Tell them: “It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I follow only what is revealed to me, for I fear the punishment of a fateful day if I disobey my Lord.” (10:15)

فُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِّنْ دِينِي فَلَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكُنْ أَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ الَّذِي يَتَوَفَّأُكُمْ وَأَمْرُتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَنْ أَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي حَسِيبًا وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (١٠٤-١٠٥)

Tell them: “People! If you have any doubts about my religion, then listen that I do not worship those whom you worship besides God. In fact, I worship the God who gives you death and I have been commanded to be among the believers and I have been directed: “Devote yourself fully to the faith in all uprightness and do not be among these idolaters whatsoever.” (10:104-105)

It is at this stage that the *rusul* are stopped from going after the arrogant among their people, and are directed to primarily concentrate on instructing their followers.

The Qur’ānic words are:

فَنَوَّلْ عَنْهُمْ فَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُلْوِّمٍ وَذَكْرٌ فِيَنَ الذَّكْرِي شَفَعُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٥١: ٥٤-٥٥)

For this reason, ignore them; now you shall incur no blame. Keep reminding them, for reminding is beneficial to the believers. (51:54-55)

عَبَسَ وَنَوْلَى أَنْ جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَى وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهُ يَزَّكِي أَوْ يَذَّكِرُ فَتَنَعَّمُهُ الدُّكْرَى أَمَّا مَنْ اسْتَغْنَى فَأَنْتَ لَهُ تَصَدِّى وَمَا عَلَيْكَ أَلَا يَزَّكِي وَأَمَّا مَنْ جَاءَكَ يَسْعَى وَهُوَ يَخْشَى فَأَنْتَ عَنْهُ تَلَهَّى كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذَكَّرَةٌ فَمَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرَهُ فِي صُحْفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ مَرْفُوعَةٍ مُطَهَّرَةٍ بَأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ كَرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ (٨٠: ١٦)

He frowned and turned away – [this *rasūl* of Ours] – because there came to him that blind man [interrupting his meeting with the leadership of the Quraysh]. And what do you know [O Muḥammad!] that he might have sought to reform [himself] or might have heard the admonition [when you delivered it] and might have gained from this admonition. And these who show indifference, you go after them even though you are not responsible if they are not reformed; and he who comes to you with zeal and also fears [Allah], you neglect him. Certainly not! [There is no need to go after them]. This is but a reminder so whoever wishes, can be reminded through it [and whoever wishes can turn a deaf ear towards it] – [It is set down] in honoured pages, exalted and untouched, in the custody of scribes, honourable and faithful. (80:1-16)

iii. *Itmām-i Hujjah*

This is the third phase. By this phase, the truth has become so evident to the addressees that they do not have any excuse except stubbornness to deny it. In religious parlance, this is called *itmām-i hujjah*. Obviously, in it besides the style adopted and the arguments presented, the very person of the *rasūl* plays a role in achieving this end. The stage is reached that the matter becomes as evident as the sun shining in the open sky. Consequently, at this instance, a *rasūl* to a great extent communicates the fate of the addressees to them, and his preaching takes the trenchant form of a final warning. Both these aspects are evident in Sūrah Fil and Sūrah Quraysh, the two *sūrāhs* which were revealed in this phase of *itmām-i hujjah* of the Prophet Muḥammad's (sws) preaching endeavour:

أَلْمَ تَرَى كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رِبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ أَلْمَ يَحْمِلُ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضْليلٍ وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَايِلَ تَرْمِيهِمْ بِحَجَارَةٍ مِنْ سِجِيلٍ فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَا كُولَ (٥١: ١٠٥)

Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the people of the elephant? Did He not foil their scheme? And sent down against them swarms of birds? [Such that] you pelted them with stones of baked clay, and He rendered them as straw eaten away. (105:1-5)

لِإِلَيَافِ قُرِيشٍ إِلَيَافِهِمْ رِحْلَةَ الشَّتَاءِ وَالصَّيفِ فَلِيَعْبُدُوا رَبَّ هَذَا الْبَيْتِ الَّذِي أَطْعَمَهُمْ مِنْ جُنُونٍ وَآمَنَهُمْ مِنْ خَوْفٍ (٤١: ١٠٦)

On account of the association of the Quraysh – the association [in the peaceful atmosphere of the Baytullah] they have with the winter and summer travels, they should worship the Lord of this House who [in these barren mountains]

fed them in hunger and rendered them secure from fear. (106:1-4)

A little deliberation shows that the first *sūrah* warns the Quraysh to remain aware of the wrath of the Almighty who, not very long ago, had destroyed the enemies of the Baytullāh in front of their very eyes. If the Quraysh become His enemies, they too will have to face the same fate. The second *sūrah* urges the Quraysh that it is the Lord of the Baytullāh who has blessed them with the favours of peace and sustenance since they are its custodians. This magnanimity entails that they should adopt a submissive attitude towards Him.

This then is the style adopted by the *rusul* in the phase of *itmām-i hijjah*.

iv. Hijrah and Barā’ah (Migration and Acquittal)

This is the fourth phase. When the *rusul* of God have done all what they can in preaching people and when they have communicated the truth to them to the extent that no one is left with an excuse to deny it, then their preaching enters this phase. In this phase, a charge sheet is handed out to the leaders of their nation with full clarity and they are intimated that time has run out for them. Hence, they will now be exterminated from the land. Along with this, the *rasūl* is given glad tidings of help and support of the Almighty. He and his followers will be saved, and in the very land in which they were helpless and weak, they will be dominant. So they should get ready to declare those who have denied as disbelievers and announce their acquittal from their views and ideologies.

The way all this ensued in the preaching of Prophet Muhammad (sws) is evident from the following *sūrahs* of the Qur’ān:

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَدِّبُ بِالدِّينِ فَذَلِكَ الَّذِي يَدْعُ الْيَتَمَ وَلَا يَحْضُرُ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّيَنَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ (١٠٧ : ٧-١)

Have you seen the one who denies reward and punishment [O Prophet!]. He it is who shoves the orphan and urges not the feeding of the poor. So woe be to these [priests of the Baytullāh] who pray being unmindful of [the essence] of their prayers; who put up a pretentious display [of worship], and are not even prepared to lend ordinary items of common use to others. (107:1-7)

إِنَّا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوَافِرَ فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْهِرْ إِنْ شَائِئْكَ هُوَ الْأَمْتَرُ (١٠٨ : ١-٣)

Upon you [O Prophet!] have We bestowed this abundance of good [this House of Ours]. So pray [now in it] only for your Almighty and offer sacrifice only for Him. Indeed, it is this enemy of yours who is rootless: none of his followers will remain. (108:1-3)

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَا عَبَدْتُمْ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ (١٠٩ : ١-٦)

Declare [O Prophet!]: “O Disbelievers! I shall worship not that which you

worship. Nor will you ever worship [only] that which I worship. Nor ever before this was I prepared to worship that which you worshipped. Nor were you ever prepared to worship [only] that Whom I have been worshipping. [So now] for you your religion and for me, mine.” (109:1-6)

إِذَا حَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا فَسَيَّخْ بِهِمْ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَعْفَرْ
إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا (١١٠ : ٣ - ١)

When comes the help of God and that victory [which We have promised you O Prophet!] and you see men embrace the religion of God in multitudes, extol His glory while being thankful to Him and seek His forgiveness. For, indeed, He is ever disposed to mercy. (110:1-3)

After this, a *rasūl* is directed to migrate. It is evident from the Qur’ān that it is on the bidding of the Almighty that this migration takes place. No messenger is allowed to exercise his own judgement in this regard. The reason is that it is not possible for a person to have knowledge of the fact when the truth has been completely communicated to his people and that now there is no possibility of any positive response from them. Only God can have this knowledge. Consequently, when angels came to the celebrated Prophet Abraham (sws) to communicate this decision of the Almighty regarding the people of Lot (sws) to him, he contended that they had come before time and argued with the Almighty as depicted in the Qur’ān (11:74-76), and when Jonah (sws) decided on his own to migrate from his people, the Almighty reprimanded him (37:139-148). It became evident from his nation’s professing faith once he returned to them that only the Almighty knows when someone can profess faith. The Qur’ān refers to his example and cautions the Prophet Muhammad (sws) to exercise patience and forbearance while waiting for God’s decision in this regard. He cannot of his own form the opinion that he has fully discharged his duty and he can leave his people. It is essential that he must continue to discharge this duty until the Almighty communicates His decision to him that the truth has been communicated to the people and that he can migrate from them.

v. Reward and Punishment

This is the final phase. It is in this phase that the divine court of justice is set up on this earth. Punishment is meted out to the rejecters of the truth and those who have accepted it are rewarded, and in this way a miniature Day of Judgement is witnessed on the face of the earth. The history of the preaching endeavours of the *rusul* related in the Qur’ān shows that at this stage generally either of the two situations arise.

Firstly, a *rasūl* has a few companions only and there is no place available to him for migration.

Secondly, his companions are in substantial numbers and the Almighty also furnishes a place to them where they can migrate and be bestowed with

independence and political authority even before this migration.

In both these situations, the established practice of the Almighty manifests itself – the practice which the Qur'ān refers to in the following words:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَادِّونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ فِي الْأَذَلِّينَ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلِبِنَّ أَنَا وَرَسُولِي إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ
(٥٨ : ٢٠ - ٢١)

Indeed those who are opposing Allah and His Messenger are bound to be humiliated. The Almighty has ordained: “I and My messengers shall always prevail.” Indeed Allah is Mighty and Powerful. (58:20-21)

In the first situation, divine punishment descends upon those who have rejected the *rasūl* in the form of raging storms, cyclones and other calamities, which completely destroy them. It is evident from the Qur'ān that the people of Noah (sws), Lot (sws), Sāliḥ (sws) and Shu'ayb (sws) besides others met with this dreadful fate. The only exception in this case were the Israelites. Since they primarily adhered to monotheism, instead of annihilation, the punishment of subjugation was meted out to them once the Prophet Jesus (sws) left them.

In the second situation, a *rasūl* and his companions subdue their nation by force.

In this situation, obviously the people are given some more time. During this time, the *rasūl* proceeds with the task of communicating the truth to people of the land he has migrated to. This unveiling of the truth continues till these people are not left with any excuse to deny it. Simultaneously, he prepares and instructs his followers and cleanses them and isolates them so that they are ready to participate in the battle between good and evil. He consolidates his political authority in this land to the extent that with its help he can exterminate the rejecters and achieve dominance for the believers. The net result of this process is that the followers and opponents of a *rasūl* are totally distinguished from one another to the extent that as per the established practice of God each group can be observed distinctly with its complete characteristics. It is evident from the Qur'ān that in each group there are three categories of people. Among the opponents are:

- (1) The *mu'ānidīn*⁴
- (2) The *mutarabbisīn*⁵
- (3). The *mughafallīn*⁶

Among the followers, the following three categories can be classified:

- (1) The *sābiqūn al-awwalūn*⁷
- (2) The *muttabi'ūn bi al-ihsān*⁸
- (3) The *du'afā* and the *munāfiqūn*⁹

4. The antagonists.

5. Those who have adopted the policy of “wait and see”.

6. The ignorant among the masses.

7. Those who take lead in supporting the cause of a *rasūl*.

8. The righteous who do not possess the initiative of the first group.

The *mu‘ānidīn* (the antagonists) are people who openly and vehemently counter the preaching of a *rasūl* once they see that it is becoming influential. The motive of their animosity is their prejudice for their traditional views as well as jealousies and vested interests. All these three motives are equal as far as their animosity is concerned; however, they are distinct from one another as far as their reality is concerned.

The first motive is found in people who are very sincere with the prevalent traditional views and are the true servers of the system they have lived in. They consider the preaching of a *rasūl* to be an open challenge to their system and the traditions of their forefathers which are present in the background of this system. Since their opposition is based on nationalistic emotions, it is without malice and meanness. Consequently, their opposition like that of Abū Jahal has much to do with their nationalistic pride, and if they profess faith, then like ‘Umar (rta) and Hamzah (rta), they profess faith with all their heart and all their might.

The second motive entices those people to animosity who are and have remained leaders in the current system whether in their religious or in their political capacity. They have become so used to leadership and control that it becomes impossible for them to accept the leadership and guidance of a *rasūl* and they also want the truth to remain subservient to them in all circumstances. It is such people who in the time of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) declared that if God had to reveal His guidance to someone why did He not reveal it to some leader of Makkah and Tā’if.¹⁰ It was precisely for this reason that the Jews had opposed Muḥammad (sws).¹¹ In the times of the Prophet Jesus (sws), the religious chiefs of the Israelites, their scholars and the Pharisees were deprived of faith for this very reason, and the following words of Jesus (sws) were verified: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”¹² Such people initially ignore the preaching of the *rusul* considering it to be worthless; however, once they see that this preaching is influencing the society the fire of jealousy ignites in them, and then they do everything that jealous people normally do against their opponents.

The third motive stirs people who are not able to see beyond their personal interests. They have become used to watching their own interests and demanding privileges and deciding what is good and what is evil with reference to themselves only. It is because of this moral degradation and meanness that they can only take hold of things which are of benefit to them; it becomes impossible for them to accept the calls of the *rusul* and face perils which the followers of the *rusul* have to face. In the times of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws), the attitude of Abū Lahab is a prominent example of a person who opposed a *rasūl* because of such a motive.

9. The infirm and hypocrites.

10. See: The Qur’ān, 43:31.

11. See: The Qur’ān, 2:109.

12. See: Matthew, 19:24.

The *mutarabbiṣīn* or those among the opponents who have adopted the policy of “wait and see” are the ones who acknowledge the veracity of a *rasūl*’s teaching; however, instead of accepting the truth simply because it is the truth they prefer to wait and see what the future has in store for this preaching. Consequently, they are not very active in opposing their *rasūl* but always put their weight with his enemies. Day and night they are busy in trying to strike some sort of a compromise between truth and evil so that they are not burdened in making a decision for themselves. In times of trials and tribulations, they may even utter a good wish for the *rasūl*, in their hearts be desirous of the *rasūl*’s success, may at times muster the courage to help him financially or morally; however, accepting him in these times and bearing hardships for him is in no way possible for them.

The *mughafallīn* (the ignorant among the masses) are those who are mentally and financially subservient to the prevailing system and in every matter obedient to the religious and political pundits of the time. They thus follow the dictates of these pundits with regard to the preaching of a *rasūl* and are at their obedient service at all times. This is their typical attitude in the first phase. However, once their pundits start to openly challenge the preaching endeavour of the *rasūl*, the difference between him and these pundits in their character as well as the nature of arguments presented becomes prominent. At that time, they become distrustful of their pundits and leave them and direct their attentions to the *rasūl*. Consequently, this change in them sometimes induces some bold and lofty character individuals among them to take the initiative and join the ranks of the *rasūl* one after the other.

Among the followers, the *al-sābiqūn al-awwalūn* are the ones who take lead in supporting the cause of their *rasūl*. They profess faith in him as soon as they hear his calls and irrespective of the consequences are ready to sacrifice whatever they have for this cause. These are people who have a noble nature, possess an insightful intellect and a vibrant heart. Their eyes really see and their ears really hear. They are the ones who analyze things in the light of sense and reason and when they are convinced of something they openly acknowledge it irrespective of any bias or prejudice as well as any danger which its acceptance may entail. They are the cream of a nation as far as character and morals are concerned, and their towering figures stand out among the masses. The call of the truth is not alien to them. It is in fact the call of their hearts, the voice of their conscience and the chant of their souls. They only await someone to call them to the truth after which they present themselves to serve him with all their mind and heart. Consequently, when the calls of a *rasūl* reach them, they neither present any excuse nor look at his lineage; they neither indulge in the analysis of the past and present nor ridicule and censure him; they neither ask for miracles nor get involved in hair-splitting and needless conversation. In fact, they come forward with full vigour and respond to the call as if it was coming from within them. With great will and determination they stand by the side of the *rasūl*, and possess the determination and will to never turn back even if their limbs are cut to pieces.

The *muttabi‘ūn bi al-ihsān* (the righteous) are people who are inspired by the

al-sābiqūn al-awwalūn into accepting the truth. Although they are not as intellectually and morally superior, they are the most outstanding in the second category of people. If they do not take the initiative in accepting the truth like the *al-sābiqūn al-awwalūn*, it is also not possible for them to stay behind once they witness the determination and outstanding behaviour of their forerunners, their initiative in accepting the truth and bearing with perseverance the difficulties in this cause. Although the sound arguments of the truth preached to them may fail to influence them much, the commitment and devotion of the *al-sābiqūn al-awwalūn* and their great deeds – soon or late – often win them over. However, a *rasūl* has to make some effort in their regard. Consequently, if the doubts which arise about the truth in their minds and those which are implanted from others are all cleared up and some examples of grit and determination are set before them, then the rust which has clung to their nature is washed away. After this, if the grace of God is there to guide and propel them to the truth, they become the companions of the *rasūl* and try to remain by his side with full strength and sincerity in all trials and tribulations that they encounter.

The *du'afā* and the *munāfiqūn* (the weak and the hypocrites) only have an apparent resemblance. As far as their inner intentions are concerned, they are very distinct from one another. Thus their characteristics should be understood separately.

The *du'afā* are people who accept the call of a *rasūl* at some point of time; in fact, at times in the very first phase. It is their intention that they fulfil its requirement as long as they live; however, since they have weak will-powers, they stumble and then recover again and again. They have, however, the ability that every time they fall, they atone for their sins through repentance and continue their journey on the right path come what may.

The *munāfiqūn*, on the other hand, are people who sometimes because of a transient influence and sometimes because of a well-planned prank become associates of a *rasūl*. In the first case, they become an embodiment of مُذَبِّحِينَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ لَا إِلَى هُؤُلَاءِ وَلَا إِلَى هُؤُلَاءِ (4:143) (waiving between this and that and belonging neither to these nor those), and in the second case they are like enemy agents in the ranks of the Muslims. Consequently, their character is no different from that of a typical enemy agent.¹³

When among the addressees of a *rasūl*, his followers and his opponents are fully distinguished from one another and they stand out separately, and the *rasūl* and his companions are fully in a position for an armed offensive, the court of divine justice gives its ruling. Following is the way this verdict was declared in the matter of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws):

1. All the antagonists and adversaries from among the leadership of the Quraysh were killed in the battle of Badr. It was only Abū Lahab who did not take part in the battle in an effort to save himself from torment. The Qur'ān

13. The afore-mentioned discussion on the types and nature of addressees of a prophet is based on Imām Islāhī's opinion. See: Amīn Ahṣan Islāhī, *Da'wat-i dīn war us kā tarīqah-i kār*, 176–206.

(111:1-3) had already declared that he would die together with his supporters and comrades. Consequently, this prediction was fulfilled word for word and a week after the defeat at Badr this leader of the Banū Hāshim was killed by plague. And such was the condition of his dead body that no one came near it till three days after his death. Ultimately, his body got decomposed and a stinking smell started to come out from it. Eventually, his corpse was placed besides a wall and covered with stones.

2. After the battles of Badr and Uhud, once the Muslims had been separated from the ranks of the disbelievers and took the shape of a distinct group, an ultimatum was given to the common masses of the Idolaters of Arabia as well as the ones among them who had adopted a policy of “wait and see”. They were given four months to mend their ways after which they would be humiliated and disgraced and would not be able to find a way out in this world.¹⁴

3. At the *hajj-i akbar* offered in the 9th *hijrah*, it was declared that once the sacred months passed, Muslims would kill these Idolaters wherever they find them except if they accept faith, adhere to the prayer and pay the *zakāh*. Only those people would be an exception to this declaration who had treaties with the Prophet Muḥammad (sws). Muslims were told that they should honour these treaties till they expire. It was obvious from this that once these expire, these people too would have to meet the same fate as had been destined and declared for the Idolaters.¹⁵

4. It was directed that all the groups of the People of the Book would pay *jizyah* and live in subjugation to the Muslims. They were further told that if this decision of God and His Prophet Muḥammad (sws) was not acceptable to them, they would also be massacred by Muḥammad (sws) and his Companions (rta).¹⁶

5. The Hypocrites were warned that it would be better for them if they repented, otherwise they too would have to encounter the fate which was destined for the rejecters.¹⁷

6. Those among the followers of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) who were sincere but were guilty of some blemishes were forgiven after some punishment,¹⁸ and the weak among these followers were given the glad tidings that if they repent and reform themselves and remain on this commitment, then hopefully the Almighty would forgive them too.¹⁹

7. The reins of political leadership of Arabia and the custodianship of the Baytullāh were given in the hands of the Muslims who had taken lead in accepting Islam. In this way, the following promise of the Almighty was fulfilled:

14. The Qur’ān, 9:1-2.

15. The Qur’ān, 9:3-5.

16. The Qur’ān (9:29).

17. The Qur’ān (9:74, 101).

18. The Qur’ān (9:118).

19. The Qur’ān (9:102).

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيُسْتَخْلَفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا أَسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكَّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِيْنُهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ (٤٥:٢٤)

God has promised those of you who professed belief and did good deeds that He would grant them political authority in the land the way He granted political authority to those who were before them and He would strongly establish their religion He chose for them, and replace their fear by peace. They will worship Me and serve none besides Me, and he who again rejects after this will indeed be among the disobedient. (24:55)

2. Preaching Obligation of Abraham's Progeny

وَجَاهَدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ مَّلَةً أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ هُوَ سَمَّاَكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا لِيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ (٧٨:٢٢)

And struggle for the cause of God in a befitting manner. He has chosen you [for this responsibility], and laid on you no burdens in the observance of your faith. He has chosen for you the way of Abraham, your father. He has named you Muslims earlier and in this [period of the last Prophet] as well. [He has chosen you] so that the Prophet may bear witness against you, and that you yourselves may bear witness [to this religion] against other people of this world. (22:78)

In this verse of Sūrah Hajj, the Qur'ān specifies that just as the Almighty chooses certain great personalities from among the progeny of Adam for *shahādah* (bearing witness to the truth), on similar lines, He also chose the progeny of Abraham (sws) for the responsibility of *shahādah*, and directed it to make an effort to fulfil all the requirements of this position. The Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَى آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (٣٣:٣)

God chose Adam and Noah, Abraham's progeny and the progeny of 'Imrān above the people of the world. (3:33)

It needs to be kept in consideration that this *shahādah* is not mere preaching and propagation: it results in a miniature Day of Judgement on this earth. The history of this *shahādah* mentioned in the Qur'ān and in other divine scriptures is that the first manifestation of this Judgement took place in the time of Noah (sws). After that, the Almighty, at various intervals, sent His *rusul* and their *shahādah* also resulted in a worldly Judgement of their peoples. This process continued till Abraham (sws) was sent. The Almighty then decided that this

position of *shahādah* would also be bestowed upon his progeny in their collective capacity, and through them religion would become an established and irrefutable fact before all the peoples of the world to the extent that they are left with no excuse to reject it. The account of this worldly Judgement is mentioned in detail in the Qur'ān and in the Bible. The Qur'ān has stated that the mount of Olive, the village of Fig, the mount of Sinai and the city of Makkah all bear witness to this Judgement. The mount of Olive is the place where, after Jesus (sws) was lifted, the punishment of those who had rejected him which was to continue till the Day of Judgement was declared. It was also at this place that the *nasārā*, a new *ummah* from among the Israelites who professed belief in him was constituted. Fig is a village situated on this mountain.²⁰ It is known that it was on the mount of Sinai that the Israelites were constituted as an *ummah*. Makkah was the place where the Ishmaelites began their life as a collectivity, and it was here that they were given the custodianship of the Baytullāh, the first centre of worshipping God made on this earth. It is evident from these details that all these areas were centres of the worldly Judgement of God mentioned above. The Qur'ān has presented them as witnesses to this Judgement with the declaration that what is it that can negate the Day of Judgement after witnessing this worldly Judgement:

وَالَّذِينَ وَالرَّبَّيْتُونَ وَطُورِ سِينِينَ وَهَذَا الْبَلْدُ الْأَمِينُ لَقَدْ حَلَقْنَا إِلَيْهِنَّ فِي أَحْسَنِ شَفَاعَةٍ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافَلِينَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ عَيْرٌ مَمْنُونٌ فَمَا يُكَذِّبُ بَعْدَ بِالَّذِينَ لَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَحْكَمُ الْحَاكِمِينَ (٩٥ - ١٤)

The Fig and Olive bear witness and [so does] the mount of Sinai and this secure city of [yours] that We have created man [at these places] in the best of moulds. Then We reverted him to the lowest [position] when he himself wanted to become low. Save those who accepted faith and did righteous deeds. For them shall be a reward unending. Now [O Prophet!] What is it that denies you about the Day of Judgement? [Ask them]: “Is not Allah the best of Judges?” (95:1-8)

For this very reason, the Almighty has regarded the Ishmaelites as the أَمَّةَ وَسَطًا (the intermediate community) on one side of which is God and His Prophet and on the other side of which are the أَنَاسٌ (all the people of the world), and just as Muhammad (sws) has borne witness to the truth before the Ishmaelites, the Ishmaelites have to bear witness to the truth before the rest of the world:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أَمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا (١٤٣:٢)

And similarly, We have made you an intermediate community so that you be witnesses [to the truth] before the people, and the *rasūl* be such a witness

20. In the Bible, it is referred to as Beth Phage. Here the word “Phage” is actually the word “Fig”. It is mentioned in the Gospel of Luke (19:29) that when Jesus (sws) came to Jerusalem, he stayed at this place before entering the city.

before you. (2:143)

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرًا أُمَّةً أَخْرِجْتُ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ (١١٠:٣)

You are the noblest community raised up for mankind [to bear witness to the truth before it because] you urge [each other to] good and forbid evil, and you truly believe in God. (3:110)

It is because of this status of the progeny of Abraham (sws) that if it adheres to the truth in its collective capacity, and keeps presenting it to other peoples of this world with full certainty and while maintaining full integrity of its contents, the Almighty will grant them dominance over their addressees who reject them. If the progeny of Abraham (sws) does not adhere to the truth in its collective capacity, then the Almighty through these very addressees will mete out the punishment of humiliation and subjugation to the progeny of Abraham (sws). Currently, both the Israelites and the Ishmaelites are facing this punishment.

It is mentioned in the Qur'ān that on the Day of Judgement the *shuhadā'* (witnesses) would be called upon. These *shuhadā'* are actually the progeny of Abraham (sws). Because of the status of *shahādah* which the Almighty has granted them in this world, they will be called to give *shahādah* (witness) on the Day of Judgement in the very manner the *rusul* would be called for this purpose. It will be they who would be first of all asked the question of their people's attitude towards the truth and whether they had really fulfilled the responsibility of delivering the truth to others:

وَنُفَخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَصَعَقَ مَنِ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنِ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ نُفَخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَى هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَنْظُرُونَ وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورٍ رَّبِّهَا وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ وَجِيءَ بِالنَّبِيِّنَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَقُضِيَ بِيَنْهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٣٩:٦٨-٦٩)

And on that Day, the trumpet shall be sounded, and all who are in the heavens and on earth shall fall down fainting, except those who shall be spared by God. Then the trumpet will be sounded again and they shall suddenly rise and gaze around them. And the earth will shine with the light of her Lord, and the book [in which deeds have been recorded] will be laid open and all the prophets and all those who were bestowed with the position of *shahādah* shall be called in, and all shall be judged with fairness: none shall be wronged. (39:68-69)

3. Preaching Obligation of the Scholars

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَيَنْفِرُوا كَافَةً فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِتَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلَيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ (١٢٢:٩)

And it was not possible for all the believers to undertake [this job]. So why

did not a few from every group among them come forward to gain sound knowledge in religion and [after attaining this knowledge], warned the people of their [respective] nations, when they returned to them that they may also take heed. (9:122)

This directive of preaching relates to the scholars of the Muslim *ummah*. The Almighty has said that it was not possible for all the Muslims to become scholars; however, some people from each group should come forward to gain sound knowledge of religion and try to save their people from the punishment of the Hereafter through warning and admonition.

The first thing which is evident from this verse of Sūrah Tawbah is that the directive of preaching stated in it does not relate to every Muslim. The verse begins with the very words that it was not possible for every Muslim to undertake this task. This, of course, is an obvious reality. Neither is each person blessed with the same ability nor does every person have the same opportunities in life. Not every Muslim can be expected to become a scholar of Islam. Thus the Almighty has clarified in this verse that not every person among the Muslims is required to become a scholar; however, some from among each of their groups should aspire to do so.

The second thing which is evident from this verse is that those who want to take up the responsibility of warning their people must first gain sound knowledge of religion. The words used for this are: لَيُنَقْهُرُوا فِي الدِّينِ. This means that they must have a deep insight and understanding of religion. They should not be quacks; they should have a deep comprehension of what they are required to preach. After the demise of the Prophet (sws), this comprehension can be obtained only through direct access to the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Consequently, it is essential that those who take up this job must have a thorough understanding of the Qur'ān and Sunnah so that they can explain Islam to people with full confidence.

The third thing which is evident from this verse is that once they have attained a masterful understanding of religion, the responsibility that scholars have to discharge is that of *indhār* and only *indhār* which means that people should be warned that one day they would have to give account of their deeds. A little deliberation shows that this is the same responsibility which prophets and messengers of God discharge. It is thus evident that after Muḥammad (sws), this responsibility of *indhār* was transferred to the scholars of the *ummah*, and after the termination of the institution of prophethood, it is the scholars who must continue to discharge this responsibility till the Day of Judgement.

The fourth thing which is evident from this verse is that the real addressee of a scholar is the nation to which he belongs. The words used are: وَلَيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ (and warn the people of their [respective] nations when they returned to them). These words specify the sphere of a scholar's preaching endeavour. They restrict him from leaving their real addressees and going after those who do not belong to them.

The fifth thing which is evident from this verse is that the objective of the

preaching endeavour of the scholars should be to warn people about the displeasure of God. The words of the verse are لَعَلَّهُمْ يَخَذِّلُونَ (that they may also take heed). The implication is that people must take heed that if they show indifference, laziness or arrogance regarding the obligations of their religion in the individual and collective spheres of life, they could be punished in this world and in the next too. It may be the desire of a religious preacher that the reins of power be transferred to pious people, Islam should reign supreme in the world and the word of God become dominant in every sphere of life; however, in spite of being a desirable wish, the basic objective of their preaching as per this verse is to warn people of the punishment and humiliation of the Hereafter.

It is evident from the above discussion that this verse of Sūrah Tawbah requires scholars of Islam to keep alive their preaching endeavour according to their ability in every nation and every place with the spirit of وَجَاهُدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جَهَادِهِ²¹. With deep concern and empathy, they should keep warning the people of their nation as well as those in authority of their obligations and duties. They should try to explain Islam to them at various levels. They should call them to the truth from various angles. They should warn them of the consequences of showing indifference to the truth. They should keep doing this till their last breath so much so, the oppression of evil rulers should also not stop them from this. This is the greatest *jihād* which scholars of religion can always wage in this world:

It is this verse of Sūrah Tawbah which is the source of various efforts of preaching and propagation which have been undertaken in this *ummah*. It is a great favour of the Almighty that no period of Muslim history has remained devoid of people who have lit up the torch of truth in the desolate darkness of heresies and innovations, and have guided people to the truth while remaining indifferent to everything in this world. They do not care what people like and what they want. All their interest resides with the truth and they spend all their energy and skill to communicate the requirements of this truth to people. They demand nothing from the people; whatever they receive from their Lord, they generously give to others. Consequently, in every period of time, they are regarded as salt of the earth, the voice of the collective human conscience and the best representatives of mankind.

It is this nature of the preaching of the scholars in consideration of which some aspects must always remain in mind.

Firstly, scholars should have so much faith in the truth they go about preaching that it should be the voice of their hearts and the call of their souls. Only after totally submitting themselves to the Almighty should they enter this field, and should declare with all their heart and soul that they have professed faith in what they are calling people to:

فُلِّ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَسُكُونِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ
الْمُسْلِمِينَ (١٦٢:٦ - ١٦٣)

21. Struggle for the cause of God in a befitting manner, (22:78).

Say: "My prayer and my sacrifice, my life and my death, are all for God, Lord of the Universe. He has no peer. Thus am I commanded, and I am the first Muslim." (6:162-163)

Secondly, there should be no contradiction between what they believe and what they actually do. Whatever ideology or truth they want to preach others should first be practiced by them. The Qur'ān is absolutely clear that this is not the work of preachers who do not practice what they preach; it is the work of people whose preaching foremost addresses themselves, and who force themselves to accept the truth which, they understood from their Lord, in its complete form and in an ultimate manner. Consequently, the Qur'ān reprimands the scholars of the Jews that they in spite of being well-versed with the *shari'ah* and knowing full well that as per the dictates of the *shari'ah* and those of sense and reason they are much more liable to practicing religion, yet it is a matter of great pity that they vehemently urge the common man to fulfil his obligations and forget their own selves in this regard:

أَقْاتَمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَفْسُكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتَلَوَّنَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ (٤٤:٢)

Would you enjoin piety on others and forget it yourselves even though you read the Book. Have you no sense? (2:44)

Thirdly, they should never show a compromising attitude to the truth. The smallest of truths that becomes evident to them should be wholeheartedly accepted by them; their tongue should bear witness to it and they should present it to the world disregarding the reproaches of a reproacher. Never should they try to change or distort the truth. All the directives of the Qur'ān and Sunnah and the complete guidance they provide should be presented by them to people and whatever they find against these two sources of Islam should be rejected by them without any hesitation whatsoever. They should not conceal any directive of religion if they are asked about it; in fact, they should present it the way it is and the way they believe in it. However, this does not mean that they should not wait for opportune moments to present religion. No doubt, the truth should be presented by them in the right manner at the right instances to the right audience; however, they must never conceal the truth or refrain from bearing witness to it for personal interests, fears, prejudices or benefits.

Consequently, the Almighty has ordained for His prophets who have been sent for *indhār* that phases and trials they will be put through are not meant to put them into any discomfort. Thus it is only befitting for them to discharge their duty disregarding any reproaches in this regard and fearing Allah only:

مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيمَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَهُ سُنَّةً اللَّهُ فِي الدِّينِ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلٍ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدْرًا مَقْدُورًا الَّذِينَ يُلْغِيُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشُونَهُ وَلَا يَخْشُونَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا

(٣٩-٣٨ :٣٣)

There is no bother for the Prophet for what Allah has made mandatory on him. Such has remained the practice of God about all previous prophets – and a time was appointed for the judgement of God –; who delivered the messages of God and feared Him only and none besides Him and God alone is sufficient to take account. (33:38-39)

While addressing the Prophet (sws) in Sūrah Mā'idah, it was said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلْغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٦٧:٥)

O Prophet! Communicate diligently whatever has been revealed to you from your Lord; And [you should know that] if you do not, you will surely fail to convey His message, and [rest assured that] God will protect you from men. Indeed, God does not guide these disbelievers. (5:67)

Fourthly, the Qur'ān should be the means of *indhār* they should adopt. Verses such as (٤٥:٥٠) (فَذَكِّرْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مَنْ يَخَافُ وَعِيدَ (remind through the Qur'ān whoever fears My warning, (50:45))), and (٥٢:٢٥) (وَجَاهَهُمْ بِهِ جَهَادًا كَبِيرًا (and through this [Qur'ān] fight with them with full force, (25:52))) point to this. For this very reason, the Prophet (sws) is a *nadhīr* (warner) for the whole world, and the scholars of religion actually communicate his *indhār* to people: بَارَكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ (١:٢٥) (blessed be He who has revealed *al-Furqān* to His servant, that it may warn the whole world, (25:1)).

Consequently, the Qur'ān says:

وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنذِرَكُمْ بِهِ وَمَنْ بَلَّغَ (١٩:٦)

And this Qur'ān has been revealed to me that I may warn you through it and all whom it may reach. (6:19)

4. Preaching Obligation of the Rulers

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَايُونَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ (٣:١٠٤)

And there should be some people among you deputed to call towards righteousness, enjoining good, and forbidding evil and only [those who make this arrangement] shall achieve salvation. (3:104)

It is evident from the words of this verse that Muslims are not addressed in it in their individual capacity; on the contrary, they are addressed here in their

collective capacity. Thus, this directive relates to the rulers of a state. The Almighty says that if in a certain piece of land Muslims are politically dominant, then they should depute some people from among themselves who should call people towards righteousness, enjoin good and forbid evil.

It is obvious that in some cases the obligation of forbidding people from evil shall be discharged by exhorting and urging the Muslims and in others through the force of law. For the first mode, those in authority have the Friday sermon available to them, which is specifically their prerogative. For the second mode, those in authority have the service of the police department, which in an Islamic state is established for this very purpose and works within the jurisdiction specified for it to achieve this objective.

It is thus evident that according to the Qur'ān, it is the duty of the Muslim rulers to call people towards righteousness, enjoin good and forbid evil. It is incumbent upon them to discharge the following responsibilities also, besides the other naturally imposed ones:

الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنْنَاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَفَمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَتُوا الزَّكَةَ وَأَمْرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
(٤١:٢٢)

These [believers] are those who, if We grant them authority in this land, will be diligent in the prayer and pay *zakāh* and enjoin what is virtuous and forbid what is evil. (22:41)

5. Preaching Obligation of an Individual

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أُولَئِياءِ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ (٧١:٩)

And believers, both men and women, are friends to one another. They urge one another to what is good and forbid what is evil. (9:71)

The word *أمر* is used in this verse to mean urging to what is good. In Arabic, just as this word means giving a directive, it also means giving counsel and advice. The fact that this verse begins with the words *وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أُولَئِياءِ بَعْضٍ* testifies that it is used here in the latter meaning. The Almighty has said that people should be urged to whatever sense and human nature call as good and forbidden from what sense and human nature call as evil. In Sūrah 'Aṣr, this is stated from another aspect by the words: *وَتَوَاصُوا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصُوا بِالصَّبَرِ*. The Qur'ān says:

وَالْعَصْرِ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا
بِالصَّابَرِ (٣- ١٠٣)

Time bears witness that these people shall definitely be in a state of loss. Yes! except those who accepted faith and did righteous deeds and exhorted one

another to the truth and exhorted one another to remain steadfast on it. (103:1-3)

It is evident from this that this is the responsibility of every person and from among the basic requirements of faith. Whether we belong to the common masses or to the intellectual class, whether we live in a jungle or in a city, whether we are the citizens of a Muslim state or residents of a non-Muslim country, we are liable to carry out this responsibility. Every person is liable to it and it is among the requirements of faith. If a believer does righteous deeds and also fulfils this requirement of faith, the Qur'ān has ensured him protection from the punishment of this world and of the Hereafter and he shall be granted the eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

It is evident from the nature and scope of this preaching as mentioned in these verses that the preacher and the preached are not distinct from one another. Every person at all times acts as a preacher as well as an addressee to this preaching. This is evident by the words used by the Qur'ān: بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْيَاءٌ بَعْضٌ (they are friends to one another). This responsibility should be discharged by a father towards his son and a son towards his father, a husband towards his wife and a wife towards her husband, a brother towards his sister and a sister towards her brother, a friend towards his friend and a neighbour towards his neighbour – in short, a person should discharge it towards every person who has an immediate relation with him. When he sees that someone among them has adopted an attitude which is contrary to the truth, he should try to urge him according to his knowledge, capacity and ability to mend his ways. It is quite possible that while at one time of the day we deliver some truth to a person, and at another time, he does this very service to us. Today, we may urge a person to the right way and tomorrow that person might urge us to the same. In short, a Muslim should keep discharging this duty in his immediate circle whenever he gets the opportunity.

Moreover, it is also essential that his preaching be directed from the nearest to the next, and a person should foremost address his family members and try to save them from the Fire of Hell. He must be aware of the fact that if he went after others while leaving aside these immediate people who might be deep in evil, then in spite of all his efforts, he may end up at the losing end in the Hereafter:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوْا أَنفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيْكُمْ نَارًا وَقُوْدُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غَلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ
لَا يَعْصُوْنَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمْرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمِرُوْنَ (٦:٦٦)

Believers! Protect yourselves and your kindred from a Fire fuelled with these men and these stones [they worship]. In charge of it will be stern and mighty angels who never disobey God's directive and promptly do what they are told. (66:6)

Here, this should also remain clear that within one's immediate sphere, there exists a sphere in which a person possesses authority. In a family system, a person often has two capacities: he is a father and he is a husband. As per the dictates of common sense and human nature, a person has authority in these two spheres. It is

because of this authority that a person in his capacity of a husband and that of a father is responsible for the affairs of his wife and children respectively. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

أَلَا كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْؤُلٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ

Beware that each of you is a shepherd, and each person will be held accountable for his herd.²²

It is about this circle of authority in which the Prophet (sws) directed Muslims to try to curb any evil they see in it. He is reported to have said:

مَنْ رَأَىٰ مِنْكُمْ مُنْكِرًا فَلْيَعْرِرْهُ بِيَدِهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَبِلِسَانِهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَبِقَلْبِهِ وَذَلِكَ أَضْعَفُ الْإِيمَانَ

When any person among you sees an evil [in his circle of authority], he should try to curb it by [the force of] his hands. If he does not have the faith to do it, he should try to curb it by his tongue and if [even] this is not possible, he should consider it bad in his heart and this is the lowest level of faith.²³

The words (فَإِنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ) (if he does not have the strength ...) do not refer to physical strength or the strength of resources which make a person liable to follow some directive; they refer to one's courage whose source is one's faith. Thus the foremost responsibility of a person in his circle of authority is to curb evil by force unless some religious expediency is attached to it. To curb evil by the tongue is the second level of faith and the last level is that a person should at least consider it to be evil in his heart. If he does not even have this feeling, then it means that he has become totally devoid of faith.

In the opinion of this writer, if this narrative is deliberated upon in the light of the Qur'ān, then its correct interpretation is the one presented above. A husband, a father and a Muslim ruler are, no doubt, responsible to curb evil by force within their circle of authority. Less than this, whatever action they take shall indeed be a show of their weak faith; however, if they venture to use force outside their circle of authority, then this is the worst kind of disorder and anarchy that they can create. Such measures have no place in religion. The Qur'ān is absolutely clear in this regard: as a preacher, no messenger of God was ever given the authority beyond reminding and lucidly presenting religion. It says:

إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكَّرٌ لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصْكِنْطِرٍ (٨٨: ٢١-٢٢)

Your duty is only to remind them; you are not to force them. (88:21-22)

22. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 412, (no. 2554).

23. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 42, (no. 177)

6. Strategy of Preaching

اَدْعُ اِلٰى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلُهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوكُمْ بِمِثْلِ مَا عَوْقَبْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَئِنْ صَرَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ
 للصَّابِرِينَ (١٢٥-١٢٦ : ١٦)

Call men to the path of your Lord with wisdom and kindly exhortation and debate with them in the most befitting manner. Indeed, your Lord best knows those who stray from His path and those who are rightly guided. And if you avenge, let this be commensurate with the wrong that has been inflicted upon you. And if you exercise patience, then this is the best way for the patient. (16:125-126)

Although these verses address the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta), and as such primarily relate to the *indhār* of the messengers, it is obvious that the directive stated in them is general and cannot be confined to them alone. Consequently, in all categories and types of preaching, these verses provide guidance regarding the strategy that needs to be adopted. If one deliberates on these verses, one can derive the following points regarding the guidance they provide us:

Firstly, wisdom, kindly exhortation and sound discussion should permeate the tone of this preaching. In the above quoted verses, by wisdom (*hikmah*) is meant the arguments and kindly exhortation means urging the addressees through sincere reminders. The implication is that whatever is presented should be supported by arguments and presented in the light of knowledge and intellect and one should not be aggressive and forceful in one's presentation. One's tone should reflect sincerity and affection. If the stage reaches that of debate and argument, then this should be done in a most befitting manner. If the opponent becomes hostile and antagonistic, then instead of responding in an even more belligerent manner, a true preacher should always remain polite and civilized.

Secondly, the responsibility of a preacher is that of preaching only: he should communicate the truth and elucidate it, and in no way show any slackness in urging and exhorting people towards it. If he discharges this responsibility in a befitting manner, he fulfils an obligation. It is the Almighty Who decides to give guidance to a person or to lead him astray. He knows full well those who have erred and also those who are rightly guided. He shall thus deal with a person in a manner he is worthy of. A preacher should not try to force the truth on others nor should he give verdicts about the fate a person shall meet in the Hereafter. This is the sole prerogative of the Almighty, and the only responsibility of a preacher is to communicate the truth, and he must not exceed this.

In the preaching of Muḥammad (sws), this aspect is explained by the Qur'ān in the following manner:

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهَتَّدِينَ (٥٦:٢٨)

You cannot guide whomever you please: it is God who guides [according to His Law] whom He pleases and He best knows those who are guided. (28:56)

إِنْ تَحْرُصُ عَلَىٰ هُدَاهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ يُضْلِلُ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِّنْ نَاصِرِينَ (٣٧:١٦)

If you are anxious about their guidance [it should remain clear to you], God does not guide those whom He [according to His law] leads astray, and God does not help such people. (16:37)

اتَّبِعْ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكُوا وَمَا جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِظًا وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ (٦:١٠٧-١٠٦)

Therefore follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord. There is no god but Him, and ignore these polytheists, and [remember that] had God pleased, they would not have indulged in polytheism and [remember also that] We have not made you their keeper, nor are you their guardian. (6:106-107)

فَذَكُّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكَّرٌ لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصِيَطٍ (٨٨:٢١-٢٢)

So [O Prophet!] Keep reminding; you are only one who reminds; you are not one to force [your message] upon others. (88:21-22)

فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ (٤٠:١٣)

So, your responsibility is only to communicate and it is Us who will take [their] account. (13:40)

Thirdly, if the addressees of preaching resort to oppression and inflict harm on the preacher, he is allowed to avenge it in a proportion commensurate with the harm inflicted while remaining within moral limits; however, in the eyes of God, it is better that a person bears this oppression without avenging it; he should not take any measure of revenge; neither should he change his stance after being overwhelmed with hardships. Those who show patience at these instances are promised great rewards. Not only will they face its good consequence in this world, they will also encounter good consequences in the Hereafter. At another instance, the Qur'ān has urged the believers to refrain from avenging the harm inflicted on them, and, on the contrary, to display a befitting attitude:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي يَبْنَىكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةً كَائِنَهُ وَلِي حَسِيمٌ وَمَا يُلَقَّاهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا يُلَقَّاهَا إِلَّا ذُو حَظٍ عَظِيمٍ وَإِمَّا يَتَرَكَّنَكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزَغٌ فَاسْتَعِدْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٤١:٣٤-٣٦)

And good and evil are not the same. Requite evil with good, and you will see

that he who is your enemy will become your dearest friend. [And remember] none receives this wisdom except those who patiently endure and none receives it except those who are truly fortunate. If, [in this matter], Satan tempts you, seek refuge in God. Indeed, He hears all and knows all. (41:34-36)

This endurance can only sustain in a person when at the very outset, preachers of Islam are fully aware of the fact that in this endeavour, there can be trials and tests in which a person is robbed of his wealth, orchards are destroyed, hardships are inflicted, limbs are severed and even life is lost. At times, evil tries to allure a preacher and at times intimidate him. Avarice and fear are used to divert him from the right path. At other times, he is put behind bars and subjected to cruel punishments which dislocate his joints; he is suspended in a muddy well; he is stoned to death right between the altar and the holy of holies, and his head is cut and presented to dancing girls. Preachers should have faith that the Almighty Who has blessed them with guidance and imposed the responsibility of preaching upon them, will definitely help them in hardships and difficulties:

وَمَا لَنَا أَلَا نَتَوَكَّلُ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانَا سُبْلَنَا وَنَصِيرَنَّ عَلَى مَا آذَيْتُمُونَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلَيْتَوْكِلُ
الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ (١٢:١٤)

And why should we not trust in God, when He has already guided us to our paths? We will endure your persecution patiently and [we know that] in God should all the trusting put their trust. (14:12)

It is these three points which form the basis of the strategy in preaching religion. The last two of these do not require much explanation; however, while presenting one's message with wisdom and with kindly exhortation certain aspects – the source of which is the example set by the prophets – should be kept in consideration. In the following pages, these shall be discussed in detail.

i. Consideration of Intellectual Ability

The first thing is that every preacher should present his message according to the intellectual ability of his addressees. People who are unaware of the fundamentals of Islam must not be preached principle directives which are based on these fundamentals. Similarly, people who are in the process of understanding the principle directives must not be presented their fine details and corollaries. If the topics of philosophy of religion cannot be presented before the masses, then without dealing with them, the details of the *sharī‘ah* will also not become attractive to the intellectual class. Imām Amīn Ahṣān Islāḥī writes:

People who do not understand this system of religion and the benefits of this way of preaching of the prophets end up urging their addressees to not only adopt the obligatory prayers but also optional prayers like those of *tahajjud* and *ishrāq* before they make an effort to create the true cognizance of God in a person. Instead of first making people aware of the need of a prophet and the

need to follow and obey him they start asking them to keep beards, trim moustaches and keep their legware above the ankles. They want to see a person overwhelmed with humility and fear of God before he has any lasting and strong faith in the Hereafter. Because of their efforts, the size of the beards may increase, legware may be restrained above the ankles, artificial humility and modesty may pervade the countenance and mannerisms of people, strict observance of the Sunnah in eating, drinking, coughing and sneezing may become a punctual habit, yet since all this has been engendered in an irrational and unnatural manner, all the piety such people boast is tantamount to “straining out gnats but swallowing camels”.²⁴

This aspect must also be kept in consideration for the instruction and training of those who profess faith in the message preached. A study of the biography of the Prophet (sws) shows that the way he dealt with senior Companions like Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī, Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal, Sa‘d ibn Mu‘ādh, Zayd ibn Thābit, Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh, ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd would be very different from the way he dealt with the common Companions. He would require them to be at a certain level and would hold them accountable to a greater degree. The way he would teach Islam to a common Bedouin would be very different from the way he would teach the Companions of high stature. By merely studying the difference in his dealings with Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal and Abū Dharr al-Ghfārī, the things which he kept in consideration in this regard become evident.

One aspect of this is that whatever he taught to people, he taught it gradually and piecemeal so that it could become deeply rooted in their hearts and minds and become part of their deeds. It is only after they had fully digested one directive that the next was given. The next directive was given in a manner that it would neither become a burden on the weak nor would it discourage and demotivate those who could digest more. While explaining this aspect, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

The preaching of a true preacher can be compared to that of a farmer. Just as a farmer cannot achieve his objective by merely sowing seeds in a land similarly, a true preacher cannot accomplish his objective by merely counselling people; it is essential that he should have the same concern for his endeavour as a dutiful farmer has for the seeds he has sown. Just as a farmer is watchful that the seeds are firmly planted in the ground, they receive water at the right time, they are protected from inclement weather, weeds do not obstruct their development, they are protected from birds and animals – and it is after a long period of hard work and care in which he forgoes rest and sleep that he is able to reap the fruit of his labour – in a similar way, a true preacher is only able to reap the harvest of his labour when he has the strength and capacity not only to present his message to people but also to bear the burden of training and instructing them. Otherwise, just as the seeds sown by an

24. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Da‘wat-i dīn awr us ka ṭarīqah-i kār*, 80.

unconcerned farmer become a target of foul climatic conditions and become fodder for animal and birds, in a similar manner, the preaching of a true preacher ends up in vain.²⁵

The Almighty has affirmed that the reason for gradually revealing the Qur'ān is to instruct and train people:

وَقُرْآنًا فَرِقْنَا لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَى مُكْثٍ وَنَزَّلْنَاهُ تَرْيَالًا (١٠٦:١٧)

And We have revealed the Qur'ān piecemeal so that you may gradually recite it to people and We have diligently revealed it. (17:106)

Similarly, it is stated:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً كَذَلِكَ لِتُبَشِّرَ بِهِ فُوَادَكَ وَرَأَلَنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا (٣٢:٢٥)

And the disbelievers asked: "Why was the Qur'ān not revealed to him in a single revelation? We have revealed it thus so that We may strengthen your heart and We have imparted it to you in a gradual manner." (25:32)

‘Ā’ishah (rta), mother of the believers, explains:

إِنَّمَا نَزَّلَ أَوَّلَ مَا نَزَّلَ مِنْ سُورَةٍ مِنَ الْمُفَصَّلِ فِيهَا ذِكْرُ الْجَنَّةِ وَالنَّارِ حَتَّى إِذَا ثَابَ النَّاسُ إِلَى الْإِسْلَامِ نَزَّلَ الْحَلَالُ وَالْحَرَامُ وَلَوْ نَزَّلَ أَوَّلَ شَيْءٍ لَا تَسْتَرِبُوا الْخَمْرَ لَقَالُوا لَا نَدْعُ الْخَمْرَ أَبَدًا وَلَوْ نَزَّلَ لَا تَرْبُوْا لَقَالُوا لَا نَدْعُ الرِّنَّانَ أَبَدًا

The first thing to be revealed in the Qur'ān was a *sūrah* from among the *mufassal* which mentions Paradise and Hell until when people entered the folds of Islam, then directives regarding prohibition and allowance were revealed and [in reality] if the directive: "Refrain from drinking liquor," had been revealed earlier on, people would have said: "We will never refrain from alcohol", and if the directive: "Do not commit fornication" had been revealed, people would have said: "We will never refrain from fornication."²⁶

ii. Psychological Considerations

Secondly, the psyche of the addressees must also be kept in consideration. Just as rain at the wrong time has no effect on the land and may at times be detrimental to it, in a similar manner, preaching done without giving due consideration to the mental state and psyche of the addressees will find little response. Thus sole reliance should not be made on the fact that since truth has

25. Ibid., 152.

26. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 895-896, (no. 4993).

its own strength it will be accepted whenever delivered; it is essential that a preacher must assess if his addressees are in the right psychological state to listen and to understand his message.

In this regard, the situations which a preacher might have to face may not be comprehensively stated here; however, the principle guidance provided by the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth is explained below:

1. Whatever aspect of religion be presented before people should be presented in a manner that instead of feeling an abhorrence and loathing for it, people have a feeling of ease and fondness for it. The same thing can pose difficulty when presented from one angle and it can provide ease when presented from another. If, at the outset of preaching, only those aspects of the message are presented which have an attraction for people who are at a distance from religion, then it can be expected that later on they will even gradually accept things which are averse to their nature. The Prophet is reported to have said: (بَشِّرُوا وَلَا تُنَفِّرُوا) (give glad tidings to people and do not spread hatred among them).²⁷ Consequently, while stating a principle, he has also said:

فَإِنَّمَا بُعْثِنُ مُسِيرِينَ وَلَمْ تُبَعِّثُو مُعَسِّرِينَ

You have been sent to create ease and you have not been sent to create difficulty.²⁸

2. A preacher should not criticize the beliefs and cherished personalities of his addressees in a style which induces in them the feelings of adhering to their views even if these views have no moral basis. He should specially refrain from regarding his own cherished personalities to be superior to those of his addressees, and should focus all his efforts in explaining his point of view and in achieving his objective. While becoming overwhelmed for the cause of truth and the urge to subdue evil, he should not say something which annoys the addressees and makes them so desperate that they retaliate recklessly. The Qur’ān says:

وَلَا سُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدُوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ (١٠٩:٦)

And do not revile those which they invoke besides God, lest in their ignorance they revile God with rancour. (6:109)

3. A preacher should specially take into consideration the fact that since the leaders and chiefs among the addressees of a preacher always want themselves to be respected, he should not adopt a style that hurts their ego in this regard lest this may become a hindrance for them in accepting the truth. The Almighty directed two of His great Prophets: Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) to keep this aspect in consideration:

27. Ibid., 17, (no. 69).

28. Ibid., 1068, (no. 6128).

إذْهَبَا إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّعْلَهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ (٤٣-٤٤ : ٢٠)

Go both of you to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed all bounds. Speak to him with gentle words that he may yet take heed or fear [his Lord]. (20:43-44)

Thus if a stage arises that criticizing the base characters of their elders becomes a requirement of preaching, indirect styles of address should be adopted. The best example of this style is the Almighty's comment on the leadership of the Quraysh in Sūrah Qalam:

وَلَا تُطِعْ كُلُّ حَلَافٍ مَهِينٍ هَمَازٍ مَشَاءٍ بَنَمِيمٍ مَنَاعٍ لِلْحَيْرِ مُعْتَدِي أَثِيمٍ عَتْلٌ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ زَيْمٌ أَنْ كَانَ ذَا مَالٍ وَبَنِينَ إِذَا ثُلَّى عَلَيْهِ آيَاتِنَا قَالَ أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (٦٨ : ١٥-١٦)

And heed not [every] swearer of false oaths, one who is despicable, maker of evil gestures, who goes about sowing seeds of dissension, forbiddancer of good, transgressor, usurper of rights, cruel and moreover is rootless. This is so because he has wealth and children. When Our revelations are recited to him, he cries out: "These are but tales of the ancients." (68:10-15)

4. If, at times, the addressees are in a mood of raising objections or have taken to jeering and ridiculing, then in this state not only should a preacher refrain from presenting his message before them but also if at times a similar situation arises after he has presented his message he should discontinue his effort and wait for some other opportune moment. The Almighty says:

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا فَأَغْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ وَإِمَّا يُنْسِيَنَكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرِي مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (٦٨ : ٦)

And when you see those who scoff at Our revelations, withdraw from them till they engage in other talk and should Satan cause you to forget this, do not sit with the wrongdoers as soon as you remember. (6:68)

5. It is essential for a preacher to abstain from presenting his message in an unconcerned and mechanical manner as well as from elaborating it too much and from being anxious to impart it at inappropriate times. He should also avoid repetition and monotony in this regard. Moreover, he should not present his message when his addressees are busy and it would be hard for them to listen to him at that time:

عَنْ أَبِي وَائِلٍ قَالَ كَانَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يُذَكِّرُ النَّاسَ فِي كُلِّ حَمِيسٍ فَقَالَ لَهُ رَجُلٌ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَانِ لَوْدَدْتُ أَنْكَ ذَكَرْتَنَا كُلُّ يَوْمٍ قَالَ أَمَا إِنَّهُ يَمْنَعُنِي مِنْ ذَلِكَ أَنِّي أَكْرَهُ أَنْ أُمْلِكُمْ وَإِنِّي أَتَحْوَلُكُمْ بِالْمُوْعَظَةِ كَمَا كَانَ النَّبِيُّ يَتَحَوَّلُنَا بِهَا مَحَافَةً السَّامَةَ عَلَيْنَا

It is narrated by Abū Wā'il that Ibn Mas‘ūd would instruct and remind people [about religion] every Thursday. A person from among them said: “O Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān, I want you to remind us every day.” He replied: “I don’t do this lest it may be burdensome on you. I remind you at intervals the way the Prophet (sws) used to remind us at intervals lest we may become fed-up.”²⁹

The Prophet (sws) regarded the brevity of a sermon to be a sign of wisdom of the sermonizer:

إِنْ طُولَ صَلَاةَ الرَّجُلِ وَقَصَرَ حُطْبَتِهِ مَكْتَمَةٌ مِنْ فِيقِهِ فَأَكْطَلُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَاقْتُرُوا الْحُطْبَةَ وَإِنْ مِنَ الْبَيَانِ سِحْرًا
Prolonging the prayer and shortening the sermon is the sign of wisdom of a person, so prolong the prayer and shorten the sermon and be informed that some sermons caste a magical spell [on the addressees].³⁰

Ibn ‘Abbās (rta), one of the Prophet’s most celebrated Companions, is reported to have said:

حَدَّثَنَا النَّاسُ كُلُّ جُمُعَةٍ مَرَّةً فَإِنْ أَبِيتَ فَمَرَّتَيْنِ فَإِنْ أَكْثَرْتَ فَثَلَاثَ مَرَارٍ وَلَا تُثْمِلُ النَّاسَ هَذَا
الْقُرْآنَ وَلَا أَفْعَيْنَكَ تَأْتِيَ الْقَوْمُ وَهُمْ فِي حَدِيثٍ مِنْ حَدِيثِهِمْ فَنَقَصُ عَلَيْهِمْ فَتَقْطَعُ عَلَيْهِمْ حَدِيثُهُمْ
فَكَمِلُهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ أَنْصَتْ فَإِذَا أَمْرُوكَ فَحَدِيْهُمْ وَهُمْ يَشْتَهُونَهُ

Counsel and remind people every Friday. If it is to be more than this, then do it twice and if you want to do this even more frequently, then do it thrice. Do not make people fed-up with this Qur’ān and I should not see you going to a group of people while they are busy conversing among themselves and you start counselling and reminding them and in this manner you make them repulsive to it. This is not right; do not speak. When people wish to, then speak to them such that they are desirous of listening.³¹

6. Just as a true preacher should refrain from presenting his message at inopportune moments, in a similar manner, he should also be very eager to cash upon opportune moments. He should be very anxious to present his message at the right time in much the same manner as the Prophet Joseph (sws) did, even when he got a chance while being imprisoned:

وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السَّجْنَ فَتَيَانٌ قَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَعْصِرُ خَمْرًا وَقَالَ الْآخَرُ إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَحْمَلُ فَرْقَانَ
رَأْسِي خُبْزًا تَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْهُ نَبْتَنَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ قَالَ لَا يَأْتِيكُمَا طَعَامٌ ثُرْزَقَانِهِ إِلَّا
بَئَانُكُمَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتِيكُمَا ذَلِكُمَا مِمَّا عَلِمْنِي رَبِّي إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ مَلَةً قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَهُمْ

29. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 17, (no. 70).

30. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 348-349, (no. 2009).

31. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1102, (no. 6337).

بِالآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ وَاتَّبَعْتُ مَلَةً آبَائِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ مَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نُشْرِكَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ذَلِكَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ يَا صَاحِبِي السَّجْنِ أَرْبَابُ مُتَفَرِّقُونَ خَيْرٌ أَمْ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءٍ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَآتَيْتُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِنَّ الْحُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ أَمْرٌ أَلَا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيْمَ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ يَا صَاحِبِي السَّجْنِ أَمَّا أَحَدُكُمَا فَيَسْقِي رَبَّهُ حَمَراً وَأَمَّا الْأَخْرَ فَيَصْلِبُ فَتَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْ رَأْسِهِ قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ الَّذِي فِيهِ تَسْتَفْيَانٌ (١٢: ٤١-٤٦)

And with him two young men also entered the prison. One said: "I dreamt that I was squeezing grapes." And the other: "I dreamt that I was carrying a loaf upon my head from which birds were eating." Interpret these [dreams] for us; we see that you are a pious man. Joseph replied: "I will interpret them for you before you are provided with food that you are fed with here. This is part of the knowledge my Lord has taught me. Indeed, I have left the faith of those who do not believe in God and they are the ones who deny the Hereafter, and I have adopted the way of my forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We have no right to associate others with God. This is the grace which God has bestowed on us and on all mankind, yet most men are not grateful. Fellow Prisoners! Are many gods better than God, the One who prevails on all? Those you worship besides Him are nothing but names which you and your fathers have devised. God has revealed no sanction for them. Sovereignty rests only with God. He has directed you to worship none but Him. This is the true faith: yet most men do not know it. Fellow Prisoners! One of you will serve his Lord with wine. As for the other, he will be crucified, and the birds will tear apart his head and eat it. This is the judgement about which you two were asking." (12:36-41)

While commenting on the Prophet Joseph's preaching initiative, Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, writes:

Let us cast a glance at the whole incident: Two people are inducted into jail together with Joseph (sws). Both have dreams and are eager to have them interpreted. Among the inmates of prison, they think that Joseph (sws) could help them in this matter. They thus describe their dreams to him with great respect and reverence. In response, Joseph (sws) does not merely interpret their dreams for them or earn some personal benefit by taking advantage of the respect they have for him; on the contrary, taking this to be an opportune moment, he presents before them the basic message of Islam and the style he adopts is such that it seems that what he has to say naturally springs forth and not something intentionally and artificially raised. This conversation points to an important principle: Just as a farmer vigilantly waits for rain so that he is able to sow seeds in his land, similarly, a true preacher should be vigilant about his surroundings; he should be ready to grasp the opportunity of presenting his message whenever he sees that someone is willing to listen to

him and the situation becomes conducive for sowing seeds of his message in the heart of his addressee. The second principle which becomes evident from this incident is that when with the grace of God such an opportunity arises it is not right to waste it or to use it to one’s personal advantage. When selfish people get such opportunities they try to use them for their own personal interests instead of making the best out of them for the cause of preaching. In current times, most of our scholars and saints are generally involved in this despicable practice. When they find someone directing his attention towards them they become very happy, but their happiness is not the happiness of the Prophet Joseph (sws) upon seeing the attention of his companions; it is rather like the happiness of a spider who spins a web around itself to catch flies and when it sees a fly approaching its web, it swells with glee on the prospects of catching a precious prey.³²

7. Preaching should begin with what is agreed upon and acknowledged. Differences should only gradually be discussed. A preacher should start by presenting facts his addressees do not dispute, which are not alien to them and are in fact the call of their hearts. Only once this is done should he proceed to present the corollaries of unanimously acknowledged facts in a gradual manner so that the addressees are unconsciously attracted towards things they are not used to and which a preacher wants them to admit. The Prophet (sws) has been directed by the Almighty to follow this principle in the following words:

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابَ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلْمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنُكُمْ أَلَا تَعْبُدُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَا تُشْرِكُ بَهْ شَيْئًا وَلَا
يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ تَوَلُّهُ فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَمْ
تُحَاجِّوْنَ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَا أَنْزَلْتُ التَّوْرَاهُ وَالْإِنْجِيلُ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقُلُونَ هَآءُنْتُمْ هُؤُلَاءِ حَاجَجُتُمْ
فِيمَا لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَمْ تُحَاجِّوْنَ فِيمَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ
يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَيْفَا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (٣: ٦٤-٦٧)

Tell them: “People of the Book, come to what is agreed upon among us: that we will worship none but God, that we will associate none with Him, and that none of us shall regard any one other than God as our Lord.” Then if they turn away, tell them: “Bear witness, then, that we are Muslims.” O People of the Book! Why do you argue about Abraham when both the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed till after him? Have you no sense? It is you who have argued about things of which you have some knowledge. Why do you now argue about that of which you have no knowledge at all? [And in reality] God knows, and you know not. Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian. He was an upright man, one who submitted to God and he was not a polytheist. (3:64-67)

32. Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī, *Da‘wat-i dīn awr us ka ṭarīqah-i kār*, 145-147.

8. If one's addressee instead of responding to the arguments of a preacher through arguments resorts to foul play, then instead of pressing his arguments, a preacher should present his message from another angle so that if his addressee does not accept it then at least he has no way to counter it. The best example of this form of exchange is the encounter of Abraham (sws) with Nimrod in which the following dialogue took place:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِي حَاجَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ إِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّيَ الَّذِي يُخْبِي وَيُبَيِّنُ قَالَ أَنَا أُخْبِي وَأُبَيِّنُ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي بِالشَّمْسِ مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأَتَ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ فَبَهِتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٢:٢٥٨)

Have you not seen the person who argued with Abraham about his Lord merely because God had bestowed sovereignty upon him when Abraham said [to him]: "My Lord is the One who gives life and death." He replied: "I too have this power." Abraham at once remarked: "God brings forth the sun from the east; you bring it forth from the west." The disbeliever was confounded [at this remark]. And [in reality] God does not guide such evil-doers. (2:258)

iii. Style of Preaching

Thirdly, since the objective of true preaching is not merely to explain the truth, but to explain it in a manner and style that the common man as well as the learned among men have no difficulty in understanding it, a true preacher should always try to present his message in such an effective and natural way that people who have the slightest of potential to understand it, are able to grasp it and it also becomes evident about those who evade it that they cannot be expected to benefit from it. For this very reason, when Moses (sws) was assigned prophethood, he prayed thus:

رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِنْ لُسَانِي يَقْنُعُوا قَوْلِي وَاجْعَلْ لِي وَزِيرًا مِنْ أَهْلِي هَارُونَ أَحِي اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا وَكَذِّبُكَ كَثِيرًا إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا (٢٥-٢٠: ٢٥)

"Lord"! [said Moses], "Open my heart for me, and make my task easy and liberate my tongue from its impediment that men may understand my speech and appoint for me a helper from among my kinsmen, Aaron my brother. Grant me strength through him and make him share my task so that we may give glory to You always and remember You always. You are surely watching over us." (20:25-35)

Thus the preaching of a true preacher should have the following characteristics:

1. His preaching should be free from any ambiguity. About the Qur'ān, which is the greatest manual of preaching, the Almighty says:

وَإِنَّهُ لَتَرْبِيلٌ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ نَزَّلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيًّا مُبِينًّا
 (١٩٥-١٩٢ : ٢٦)

And surely this is revealed by the Lord of the Universe with diligence and meticulousness. The faithful spirit has brought it down into your heart that you may give warning in an eloquent Arabic tongue. (26:192-195)

While explaining the style of preaching of the prophets and other righteous people, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī, writes:

... the style adopted by them is so clear and lucid that their preaching penetrates every section of the society. It is neither too brief and ambiguous nor too lengthy. Similes and metaphors also do not abound in it. It also does not contain very many veiled references. The words used are also not uncommon and difficult. The style adopted has nothing ungainly and despicable about it. The language is pure and articulate; the metaphors used are very apt and the similes very effective. Moreover, instead of anger, the style resounds with sincerity and instead of harshness it has softness; the words used are simple and clear; they are not pompous and ostentatious. Dignity and efficacy are the hallmark of their style which is well-suited to the objective they intend to accomplish. Furthermore, the nobility of their soul, the earnestness and vigour of their preaching, the faith and confidence their knowledge produces in their addressees and most of all the intense desire to make others understand their message – all this enhances the style of preaching, so much so that it develops into a new style which itself becomes an example and standard for others. The real feature of this style is its attractiveness and its ability to be easily understood. However, besides this, its simplicity and fluency bestows on it such a literary splendour that the works of the literati appear lifeless before it. Every word of their preaching is pleasing for the ears and every sentence nurtures the soul. So profound is its influence that it changes the destinies of nations what to speak of a few individuals. Such is the power it wields for a preacher that armies equipped with weapons are helpless before it.³³

2. A preacher should not think that he has discharged his duty after merely presenting his message in just one style and manner; he should in fact try to present his message in various styles and ways to the extent that his enemies as well as his followers vouch for the fact that he has done the utmost in this regard:

وَكَذَلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ وَيَقُولُواْ دَرَسْتَ وَلَيْسَنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (٦: ١٠٥)

And in this way, We present Our arguments in various ways so that they are left with no excuse to deny them and that they may say: "You have thoroughly recited it out to us," and that We may explain this for those who

33. Ibid., 108.

want to know. (6:105)

3. The discourse of a true preacher should not merely be exemplary in the arguments and reasoning it furnishes, it should also be vibrant with fervour and enthusiasm. Such should be this enthusiasm that his addressees should feel as if he is speaking his heart out to them. The Makkan *sūrahs* of the last two groups of the Qur’ān are a very good example of this aspect. If one reads them, one can feel the fire and fury which pervades them. It is as if one can hear roars of thunder and the resounding of waves as they strike the shore. This feature emanates in a true preacher out of the strength of his ideology, his conviction and his sympathy and compassion for his addressees. It makes him a person possessed with the mission of communicating as far as he can the fact that people must make themselves ready for the Day of Judgement. It is narrated about the Prophet (sws):

كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِذَا حَطَبَ احْمَرَتْ عَيْنَاهُ وَعَلَّ صَوْتُهُ وَاشْتَدَّ غَصَبُهُ حَتَّىٰ كَانَهُ مُنْدَرٌ جَيْشٌ يَقُولُ
صَبَّحْكُمْ وَمَسَّاَكُمْ

When the Messenger of God would deliver a speech, his eyes would become red, his voice would increase in pitch, his emotions would be stirred so much so that it would seem as if he is trying to warn [people] of the [danger of] an army onslaught. He would say: “It might come upon you in the morning or in the evening.”³⁴

4. Besides this enthusiasm and vivacity and this vigour in presenting arguments, a preacher should never resort to polemical debate which aims to belittle the views of his addressees. If his addressees adopt this attitude, he should ignore them and not worry about the fact that this evasion on his part would be counted as his defeat. He should know that there is so great a difference and contradiction between true preaching and such disparaging debates that they cannot co-exist:

فَلَا يُنَازِعُنَّكَ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَادْعُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ إِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ هُدًىٰ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ وَإِنْ حَادُوكَ فَقُلْ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا
تَعْمَلُونَ اللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلُفُونَ (٦٩-٦٧ : ٢٢)

So let them not dispute with you concerning this and you should keep calling them [in this way] to your Lord. Indeed, you are on the straight path, and if they argue with you, say: “God knows best all that you do. God will decide the matter in which you are differing from one another on the Day of Judgement.” (22:67-69)

5. The discourse of a preacher should always strictly adhere to his objective and should be in line with the purpose he wants to achieve. His words should be in harmony with each other and his discourse should be so cohesive and uniform that

34. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 347, (no. 2005).

wherever he is heard, it seems that the message that emanates from him is the same everywhere and the objective he eagerly wants to achieve is also the same everywhere. The Qur'ān is the best example of such a discourse right from its beginning to its end. Preachers should keep consulting it from this particular angle.

iv. Style of Reasoning

The fourth thing is that besides their style of conversation, true preachers should also try as best as they can to create in their style of reasoning the same characteristics as those of the prophets of Allah. The Almighty has revealed the Qur'ān as a masterpiece of literature imbuing it with these characteristics. A deep reading of the Qur'ān shows that these characteristics are very apparent throughout its text. Following are these characteristics:

Firstly, the prophets never adopt those artificial styles of reasoning which result from the formation of a formal discipline from simple facts of knowledge, and which interest only a few intellectuals who want to play and juggle with words. On the contrary, the prophets base their reasoning on data which is simple, natural and pure, and present them with reference to established facts of common sense in such a vibrant and living manner that it awakens the intellect and mind and rejuvenates dead hearts. It is because of this very natural style of reasoning that every upright person sees that it is the call of his own heart.

Secondly, embedded in the message of the prophets is not mere reasoning but also cues and prompts which are able to create within their addressees the power of reasoning. Thus unlike the syllogism of the logicians, they try to focus the attention of their addressees on the sources of their arguments. They would state certain corollaries of these arguments and just give a small hint of the others. In other cases, they would fully explain all the corollaries and leave their obvious consequences to the intellect of their addressees. Such would be the effect of this approach that their addressees would reach these consequences themselves through deliberation and observe the very facts in broad day light which the preacher wanted to take them to. In this manner, they teach and instruct their addressees to discover details themselves from compact expressions, grasp the corollaries and off-shoots of foundational statements, understand part from whole and the implicit from the explicit and the hidden from the apparent. Such is the extent of this training that the addressees find the objective these preachers want to achieve to be already etched in their hearts. They find such radiance from the wisdom and insight imbued by this style of reasoning that every thing within the soul and in the external world becomes absolutely clear to them.

Thirdly, they neither base their arguments on some wrong views of their addressees nor on their irrational notions. On the contrary, the basis of their message rests on such sound arguments that changes in situations and circumstances and in views and ideologies do not effect these arguments. Their arguments are founded on premises about whose veracity they can fully vouch for, and because of this feature this premise is able to validate another truth. It is thus because of this characteristic that their discourse in every period of time and in spite of the changed circumstances is able to influence hearts and successfully

conquer minds with the same potency.

Fourthly, they never retaliate with similar objections on the ideology of their addressees which these addressees had raised on them. Since this style of reasoning is totally incorrect and instead of validating the truth is instrumental in making it dubious, it is never adopted by the prophets of Allah. They try to convince their addressees of their message on the merit of its own arguments, and adhere to this approach even if their addressees raise a thousand objections against them.

Fifthly, their reasoning initiates from commonly accepted realities and slowly progresses to what is different between the two. They first try to convince their addressees of what is accepted in this world as established facts in the world around man and that within him, historical realities, certain facts of knowledge and established norms of human nature and common sense about which no upright person has any grounds to reject. Thus, they begin their arguments on these foundations and bring out their own message as corollaries to these foundational and fundamental statements, and in this way gradually familiarize their addressees to the most unknown of things that they imperceptibly accept them and then after accepting them are induced to accept their corollaries also.

v. Methods of Preaching

The fifth thing is that a preacher should not insist on using just one method of preaching; on the contrary, he should adopt all methods of his times which are useful and effective for presenting views before people with wisdom and sympathy. A history of the prophets shows that they always took into consideration the circumstances in this regard. When people were not conversant with reading and writing, the prophets of Allah adopted the method of verbally presenting their message, and this message was transferred as oral traditions to their people generation after generation. In those times, preaching was confined to personal contacts, oral presentation and adopting various means so that the message is etched in the minds of the addressees. However, once writing became a formal discipline, the prophets of God used the written word also for this purpose. The Torah, the Psalms, the Gospel and the Qur’ān were revealed in those times.

Similarly, the prophets of God fully used to their advantage all means of interaction and discussion as well those which were needed to solve collective issues if these means were morally and religiously correct. Muḥammad (sws) called his family members to a dinner and presented his message before them. He also presented his message from the hillock of Safā, as per the tradition of his people. He went himself to meet the chiefs of Makkah and Tā’if. In the time of *hajj*, he presented his message to the chiefs of various tribes. He also sent his envoys to certain important people and created opportunities to present his message in the various markets and souks of the Arabs. He also wrote letters to various people for this purpose. In short, he adopted all the ways that were available to him in those times in Arabia to present his message.

Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī writes:

In certain religious circles, God knows from where this notion has emerged

that the prophetic and standard way of preaching is that a preacher should get hold of a staff and some nuts and embark upon preaching; neither should he cover his head nor wear shoes; he should roam about in various villages and wherever he finds someone he should start preaching to him whether or not he is interested to hear him; if he sees a couple of people standing in some place, he should stop and commence his speech; if he sees people in a group whether in a train or in a market place or on roadsides, his sermon should begin; he should barge into every gathering and forum; his addressees may get tired of hearing him but he would not get tired of talking to them; people might get weary of his zeal in pursuing them but he, on the other hand, would continue to be at their heals like a divinely appointed sentinel. People might start hiding from him for fear of his discussion, and at times because of distress may become insolent and rude but he continues with his ways with the same devotion and commitment. When he is requested for a sermon, he delivers it, when he is asked to read the *mīlād*, he readily obliges and when he is faced with people of adverse views, he plunges into debate with them. This then is the true picture of a preacher and his preaching as imagined by most religious people. It is possible that these people would not outright reject the fact that the developed and scientific means of education and preaching currently available have some advantages, however the real way of preaching which would earn the blessings of God is the one we have referred to above and which according to them was adopted by the prophets of God.

In my opinion, regarding this way of preaching to be that of the prophets is partly owing to a scarce understanding of the way they actually preached and partly because of the desire of the religious people that the way they have adopted themselves – apart from which they have no ability to adopt any other – should be regarded as sacred. As far as I have studied the methodology of preaching of the prophets, I have come to the conclusion that the ways which they have adopted in their preaching were the most developed ones of their times, and with the change of circumstances and evolution in civilization and society, these ways also changed which is a proof of the fact that insisting on a particular way of preaching is not correct; true preachers should in fact make full use of the ways that their circumstances and times afford them and adopting which they can better make use of their abilities and skills.³⁵

In this regard, certain things should be kept in consideration:

Firstly, immoral and unethical methods should not be adopted whatsoever in preaching. If this immorality exists in some method or means, then these methods should only be resorted to once the immorality is cleansed from it. Consequently, when the Prophet (sws) called upon his people from the top of the Ṣafā hillock, he did adopt the very method of *nadhīr ‘uryan* (naked warner) that was in currency yet he never took off his clothes the way warners in those times did.

35. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Da‘wat-i dīn awr us ka ṭarīqah-i kār*, 85-86.

Secondly, methods which damage the honour of preaching or that of the preacher should also not be adopted. When at one instance such a situation arose in the preaching endeavour of the Prophet (sws), the Almighty said:

أَمَا مِنْ اسْتَغْنَىٰ فَأَقْتَلَ لَهُ تَصْدِيَ وَمَا عَلَيْكَ أَلَا يَزَّكِي وَأَمَا مِنْ جَاءَكَ يَسْعَىٰ وَهُوَ يَخْشَىٰ فَأَقْتَلَ
عَنْهُ ثَلَاثَةِ كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذَكِّرَةٌ فَمَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرَهُ فِي صُحْفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ مَرْفُوعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ كَرِامٍ
(بررةٌ ٨٠ : ١٦-٥)

He who shows indifference, you go after him even though you are not responsible if he is not reformed; and he who comes to you with zeal and also fears [Allah], you neglect him. Certainly not! [There is no need to go after them]. This is but a reminder so whoever wishes, can be reminded through [and whoever wishes can thrust his fingers in his ears. It is set down] in honoured pages, exalted and untouched, in the custody of scribes, honourable and faithful. (80:5-16)

Thirdly, those methods of preaching should not be adopted which damage the objective of preaching and instead of being conducive for people make them even more averse to it. One prominent example of this is the polemical speeches and debates which are arranged by our religious circles in the same way as duels are arranged between wrestlers even though the Qur’ān has directed us in the following words about this issue:

وَلَا تُحَاجِدُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالْتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَّمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا
وَأُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَإِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ (٤٦:٢٩)

And do not argue with the People of the Book but in a befitting manner except with those among them who do evil, and say: “We profess belief in that which has been revealed to us and which was revealed to you and Our God and your God is one and to Him we submit.” (29:46)

The Sharī‘ah of Jihād

Peace and freedom are two essential requirements of a society. Just as various penal measures help in protecting a society from the evils and excesses committed by an individual, resorting to armed offensives sometimes becomes essential to curb the evils perpetrated by countries and nations. As long as diplomatic relations and negotiations can be used to resolve matters, no one would endorse the use of force for settling affairs. However, if a nation threatens to disrupt the peace and freedom of the world and its arrogance and haughtiness exceed all bounds, a stage may come when the use of force and power becomes essential to keep it in check. In such cases, it is the inalienable right of humankind to forcibly stop its subversive activities until peace and freedom of the world are restored. The Qur’ān asserts that if the use of force had not been allowed in such cases, the disruption and disorder caused by insurgent nations would have reached the extent that the places of worship would have become deserted and forsaken, what to speak of the disruption of the society itself:

وَلَوْلَا دَفَعَ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِيَعْضٍ لَهُدِّمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبَيْعُ وَصَلَوَاتُ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا (٤٠:٢٢)

And had it not been that Allah dislodge one people through another, the monasteries and churches, the synagogues and the mosques, in which His praise is abundantly celebrated would be utterly destroyed. (22:40)

This use of force is called *jihād* or *qitāl*,¹ however, in the Qur’ān, it can be classified in two distinct categories:

Firstly, against injustice and oppression.

Secondly, against those who reject the truth after it has been conclusively communicated to them.

The first type of *jihād* is an eternal directive of the *sharī‘ah*. As stated earlier, it is undertaken to curb oppression and injustice. The second type, however, does

1. The literal meaning of *jihād* is to strive for a cause with full force. In the Qur’ān, it is used in this general sense as well as in the sense of an armed offensive in the way of Allah. Here, this second meaning is implied.

not relate to the *sharī'ah*; it relates to the divine law of *itmām al-hujjah* (conclusive communication of the truth). This law is always implemented in this world directly by the Almighty through people on whom He bestows the status of *risālah* (messengerhood). In the history of mankind, for the very last time this status was conferred on the Prophet Muḥammad (sws):

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٤٧:١٠)

And for each community, there is a messenger. Then when their messenger comes, their fate it decided with justice and they are not wronged. (10:47)

According to this law, once the truth is communicated to a people through their respective messengers in a conclusive manner and they still deny it in spite of being convinced about it, they are punished in this very world. At times, this punishment is through earthquakes, cyclones and other calamities and disasters, while, at others, it emanates from the swords of the believers. As a result, those who have denied the truth are totally vanquished in their land and the truth reigns supreme in it.² In the case of Prophet Muḥammad (sws), the Divine scourge took this very form. Consequently, just as the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta) were asked to wage war against oppression and injustice, they were also asked to wage war to punish the rejecters of the truth once it had become totally manifest to his addressees. This was actually a Divine plan executed through human beings. It should be viewed as a divine practice (*sunnatullāh*) and cannot be initiated by human beings in any manner; it is not part of the *sharī'ah*. The Qur'ānic words (يَعْذِبُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ (٩: ١٤)) allude to this very reality.

In the following pages, this writer will attempt to explain the directives of the *sharī'ah* regarding both these categories of *jihād*.

1. The Permission for Jihād

أَذْنَ اللَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظُلْمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ (٢٢: ٣٩-٤٠)

Permission to take up arms is hereby granted to those who are attacked because they have been oppressed and God indeed has power to help them – those who have been unjustly driven from their homes, only because they said: “Our Lord is Allah.” (22:39-40)

This is the first verse of the Qur'ān in which the Companions (rta) of the Prophet (sws) who had migrated from Makkah (the *Muhājirūn*) were given

permission to fight back if they wanted in case they were attacked. The Qur’ān says that these Companions (rta) were driven out of their homes because they believed that Allah was their Lord and as such were totally innocent. A little deliberation shows that this one sentence depicts the whole charge-sheet against the Quraysh. The reason for this is that no one is willing to leave his home unless he is oppressed for living there and thereby utterly compelled to migrate. The words **بِأَنَّهُمْ ظُلْمُوا** (because they have been oppressed) refer to this very aspect, and it is because of this ruthless and unfounded oppression that the Qur’ān allowed the Muslims to resort to force against aggression.

This right to use force has been given to the Muslims in their collective capacity. Every person who appreciates the linguistic style of the Qur’ān knows that verses which authorize Muslims to use force do not address them in their individual capacity. Like the verses which mention punishments, these verses too address the Muslims as a community. Thus any step which is to be taken for use of force must originate from their collective system. No person or group has the right to take a step on its own in this regard on behalf of the Muslims. The word **إذن** (permission is granted) in the above quoted verse of Sūrah Hajj also points to the fact that the very first question in an armed offensive is that of justification and permission. The Almighty permitted the Muslims of those times to fight back the Quryash only when Muslims had political authority organized in the form of a state in spite of the tremendous oppression let loose upon them. Consequently, in these times also, this is an essential pre-requisite of war.³ The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

إِنَّمَا الْإِمَامُ جُنَاحٌ يُقَاتَلُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِ وَيَنْقَيِ بِهِ

A Muslim ruler is the shield [of his people]. An armed struggle can only be carried out under him and people should seek his shelter for themselves [in war].⁴

2. The Directive of Jihād

وَقَاتُلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ وَاقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ

3. In recent times, some people have refuted the requisite of state authority by citing the armed offensives launched by Abū Baśir against the Quraysh after the truce of Hudaybiyyah. This can only be termed as ignorance of the Qur’ān and established history. According to the Qur’ān (8:72), the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims of the state of Madīnah were not responsible for the actions and deeds of people who had not migrated to Madīnah. Moreover, we even find the following harsh remarks of the Prophet (sws) about Abū Baśir when he returned to Madīnah after killing one of his two custodians: **وَيَلِ أَمَّةٌ سَفَرَ حَرْبَ لَوْ كَانَ لَهُ أَحَدٌ** (his mother be cursed, if he finds some supporters, he is bound to ignite the flāmes of war.) See: Al-Bukhārī, Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ, 447-450, (nos. 2731-2732).

4. Bukhārī, Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ, 489, (no. 2957).

ثَقْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَخْرَجُوهُمْ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجُوكُمْ وَالْفَتْتَةُ أَشَدُ مِنْ الْقَتْلِ وَلَا تُقَاتِلُوهُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّىٰ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِيهِ فَإِنْ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ كَذَلِكَ حَرَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ فَإِنْ اتَّهَوْا فِيْنَ اللَّهِ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ وَقَاتَلُوهُمْ حَتَّىٰ لَا يَكُونُ فِتْنَةً وَيَكُونُ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ فَإِنْ اتَّهَوْا فَلَا عُذْوَانَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَاتُ قَصَاصٌ فَمَنْ اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَتَقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُقْتَيِنَ (٢: ١٩٠-١٩٤)

And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight against you and do not transgress bounds [in this fighting]. Indeed, God does not like the transgressors. And kill them wherever you find them and drive them out [of the place] from which they drove you out and [remember] persecution is worse than carnage. But do not initiate war with them near the Holy Ka'bah unless they attack you there. But if they attack you, put them to the sword [without any hesitation]. Such disbelievers deserve this very punishment. However, if they desist [from this disbelief], Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. And keep fighting against them, until persecution does not remain and [in this land] Allah's religion reigns supreme. But if they mend their ways, then [you should know that] an offensive is only allowed against the evil-doers. A sacred month for a sacred month; [similarly] other sacred things too are subject to retaliation. So if any one transgresses against you, you should also pay him back in the same coin. And have fear of Allah and keep in mind that Allah is with those who remain within the bounds set by Him. (2:190-4)

Once the permission to wage *jihād* was revealed in the verses of Sūrah Hajj as stated earlier, a detailed directive regarding *jihād* was basically revealed in the above quoted verses of Sūrah Baqarah. All other ones which mention *jihād* actually elucidate and emphasize what is stated here as well as elaborate on the right course in certain issues⁵ that arose once the Muslims set about following this directive.

The context of the verses cited above is that once the Baytullāh was regarded as the *qiblah*, Muslims became anxious to offer *hajj*; however, they realized that the Quraysh would be an impediment to this. If they offered resistance matters could lead to an armed conflict, and the sanctity of the sacred months would not allow this to happen. Consequently, when a question was asked on this issue, the Qur'ān replied that the sanctity cannot be violated; however, if the Quryash take the initiative in waging war, Muslims were told that they should fight them to crush their resistance. This is what the context says; however, the directive does not end here, and the Qur'ān goes on to extend it by adding certain other details to it. It clarifies the nature of responsibility the Muslims have been entrusted with *viz-a-viz jihād*, the real reason from which they should derive their motivation in waging *jihād*, the moral and ethical limits of this undertaking, and, finally, the real objective of *jihād*. Through these details, the two categories of *jihād* referred

5. One such example can be seen 2:244.

to earlier in this chapter are clearly set forth.

These details will now be explained:

i. Nature of the Obligation

The first thing that is evident from these verses is that Muslims should not merely fight the Quraysh if they resist them in offering *hajj*, but, as the Qur’ān goes on to say, also continue to fight them until the persecution perpetrated by them is uprooted and Islam prevails in the whole of Arabia. This, obviously, was a very big responsibility and could not have been imposed on an Islamic state without giving due consideration to its moral as well as military might. Consequently, the Qur’ān (8:65) explained that this aspect had been taken into account, and, as a result, the extent of responsibility would vary in different phases of the Prophet’s struggle.

In the initial phase, when the Muslim ranks basically consisted of the pioneers among the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār and their faith and moral character were of an exemplary degree, they were required to fulfil this responsibility even if the enemy was ten times their might. The Qur’ān says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَرِّضْ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ إِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ عِشْرُونَ صَابِرُونَ يَعْلَمُو مَا تَنْهَىٰ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ يَعْلَمُو الْفَأْلًا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ (٨:٦٥)

Prophet! Rouse the believers to wage war. If there are twenty amongst you, patient and persevering, they will subdue two hundred: if a hundred, they will subdue a thousand of the disbelievers: for these are a people without insight. (8:65)

While explaining the word “insight,” Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, writes:

It is this insight which is man’s real quality. When a believer who is equipped with it sets foot in the battlefield, he finds within his solitary soul the power of a whole army. He experiences Divine help around him and death becomes dearer to him than life. The reason is that his insight illuminates before him the exalted destination in Paradise reserved for martyrs. It is this very insight which produces in him the perseverance and strength that make him equal in might to ten people who are devoid of it.⁶

This was the first phase. After it, many people entered the folds of Islam. Though the number of Muslims increased significantly as a result, yet the converts did not have the same insight in religion as their forerunners before them. Consequently, the Almighty reduced the burden of this responsibility also:

الآنَ حَفَّ اللَّهُ عَنْكُمْ وَعَلِمَ أَنَّ فِيكُمْ ضَعْفًا فَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ صَابِرَةٌ يَعْلَمُو مَا تَنْهَىٰ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ

6. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 3, 506.

مِنْكُمْ أَلْفُ يَعْلَمُوا أَلْفَيْنِ يَاذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ (٨:٦٦)

Now, God has lightened your burden for He knows that weakness has come into you: So, if there are a hundred of you, patient and persevering, they will subdue two hundred, and if a thousand, they will subdue two thousand, with the permission of God and [in reality], God is with those who patiently persevere. (8:66)

A similar policy was adopted by the Almighty regarding the extent of requirement that arose in wars that the Muslims had to fight. In the battles of Badr, Uhud and Tabūk, the responsibility was much more and each Muslim was required to present his services as a combatant. Those who tried to shirk this responsibility were severely reprimanded by the Almighty. They were told that if they hold their life, wealth and kin dearer than *jihād*, they should wait for the Almighty's decision against them Who would punish them in the same manner as He had decided to punish those who deliberately rejected Muhammad (sws).⁷ However, in military campaigns in which it was not necessary that each Muslim offer his services, the Almighty informed the Muslims that though presenting one's self for *jihād* carried great reward – which by no means was ordinary –, it was not compulsory for each Muslim to participate in them:

لَا يَسْتُوِي الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُولَئِي الْضَّرَرِ وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ فَضَلَّ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ ذَرَّةً وَكُلُّاً وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَى وَفَضَلَّ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا دَرَجَاتٌ مِنْهُ وَمَغْفِرَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا (٤: ٩٥-٩٦)

Not equal are those of the believers who sit at home without any genuine excuse and those who strive hard and fight in the cause of Allah with their wealth and their lives. Allah has given preference by a degree to those who strive hard and fight with their wealth and their lives above those who sit [at home]. [Truly], for each, Allah has made a good promise and [truly] Allah has preferred those who strive hard and fight above those who sit [at home] by a huge reward. High status and forgiveness and mercy from Him. And Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most-Merciful. (4:95-96)

At another place, the Qur'ān has unequivocally stated that showing cowardice and running away from the battlefield having stepped into it is not befitting for a believer. So great is this sin that the Almighty has promised the fateful doom of Hell fire for such cowardice:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا لَقِيْتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا زَحْفًا فَلَا تُوَلُّهُمُ الْأَدْبَارَ وَمَنْ يُوَلِّهُمْ يَوْمَنِ ذُبْرَهُ إِلَّا مُتَحَرِّفًا لِقَتَالٍ أَوْ مُتَحَيِّزًا إِلَىٰ فِتَّةٍ فَقَدْ بَاءَ بِعَذَابٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَأْوَاهُ جَهَنَّمُ وَبِعْسَ الْمَصِيرُ (٨: ١٥-١٦)

7. The Qur'ān, 9:24.

Believers! When as an organized army you meet these disbelievers, never turn your backs on them. And [you should know that] whoever turns his back to them on such a day – unless it be a stratagem of war, or to retreat to a part of his army, – he indeed has drawn upon himself wrath from Allah. And his abode is Hell, and worst indeed is that destination! (8:15-6)

While explaining these verses, Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī, writes:

Now the Muslims are being given directives regarding imminent wars. They are told that when they encounter the enemy army in formal warfare, they must never turn their backs. This directive has been given in the light of the background delineated earlier in which the Almighty had promised Divine help. It is an anathema for people who have the support of Allah and His angels to run away from the battlefield.

وَمَنْ يُوَلِّهُمْ يُوَمَّدَ دُورٌ: in such a situation, those who desert the battlefield would invite the wrath of God and Hell shall be their abode. This shows that the crime is no less than that of apostasy and disbelief. Obviously, the severity of this sin hinges on the fact that, at times, a person who runs away from the battlefield poses a great threat to the whole army and sometimes to the whole Muslim collectivity.

إِلَّا مُتَحَرِّفًا لِقتالٍ أَوْ مُتَحِيزًا إِلَى فَة: the implication is that only those measures are an exception which a soldier adopts as military tactics or, which as in some cases when its need arises, he has to adopt to vacate his front and join some other rank. In other words, what is forbidden is to show one's back to the battlefield in order to flee from the fight. Showing one's back as a war strategy is a different matter [and is not forbidden].⁸

Three things are obvious from the stipulations that all these verses mention:

Firstly, even if the sole ground to wage *jihād* in these times – oppression and injustice in a country – exists in a particular case, *jihād* never becomes obligatory unless the military might of the Muslims is up to a certain level. In the times of the Prophet (sws), when large scale conversions took place in the later phase, the Almighty reduced the Muslim to enemy ratio to 1:2. It cannot be imagined that in later periods it can be more than this. Consequently, not only should the Muslims consolidate their moral character, but they should also build their military might if they want to wage *jihād* when the need arises. The Qur’ān gave a similar directive to Muslims of the Prophet’s times in the following words:

وَأَعْدُوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ ثُرْبَهُونَ بِهِ عَدُوُ اللَّهِ وَعَلُوُّكُمْ وَآخَرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ
لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ وَمَا تُنَفِّقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ وَأَثْمَمْ لَا تُظْلَمُونَ (٦٠: ٨)

8. Amīn Ahṣan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 3, 450.

And muster against them all the men and cavalry at your disposal so that you can strike terror into the enemies of Allah and of the believers and others beside them who may be unknown to you, [though] Allah knows them. And [remember] whatever you spend for the cause of Allah shall be repaid to you. And you shall not be wronged. (8:60)

Secondly, abstaining from participating in *jihād* becomes a sin only when a Muslim sits at home in spite of the fact that an Islamic State has given a call to each and every Muslim to participate in *jihād*. In religious terminology, such an appeal is called *nafir 'ām* (نَفِير عَام). In such instances, the sin is as grave as hypocrisy. In the absence of this situation, participating in *jihād*, no doubt, is a very desirable deed if the need arises; however, it is not obligatory and a person who does not undertake it cannot be called a sinner.

Thirdly, deserting the battlefield of *jihād* is totally forbidden. No believer should show such feebleness. It is tantamount to showing distrust in Allah, giving priority to this world over the next and trying to make life and death dependent upon one's own strategy – all of which cannot exist with true faith.

ii. The Driving Force

The second thing which is evident from the above quoted verses (2:190-4) is that the “armed warfare” (قتال) mentioned therein must neither be undertaken to gratify one’s whims nor to obtain wealth or riches. It must also not be undertaken to conquer territories and rule them or to acquire fame or to appease the emotions of communal support, partisanship and animosity. On the contrary, it should be undertaken only and only for the cause of Allah as is evident from the words فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ (in the way of Allah) after the word قَاتِلُوا (wage war). Consequently, at the very beginning, the Qur’ān has clarified that such a sacred undertaking has no relation with personal or selfish motives. This is the war of the Almighty that His servants undertake at His behest according to the guidelines provided by Him for His cause. They themselves act as mere agents and instruments of the will of God. They have no objective of their own before them in this undertaking; rather they have to fulfil the objectives of the Almighty. Consequently, they cannot deviate in the least from this capacity:

The Qur’ān says:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ الطَّاغُوتِ فَقَاتَلُوا أُولَئِكَ الشَّيْطَانُ
إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا (٤ : ٧٦)

Those who have professed faith, fight in the cause of Allah; and those who have rejected faith, fight in the cause of Satan. So fight you against the friends of Satan. Ever feeble indeed is the plot of Satan. (4:76)

The Prophet (sws), at various instances, also explained very forcefully this purport of the Qur’ān:

Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī (rta) narrates that once a person came to the Prophet (sws) and said that some people fight for the spoils of war, some for fame and some to show off their valour; he then asked the Prophet (sws): “Which one of them fights in the way of Allah?” The Prophet (sws) replied: “Only that person fights in the way of Allah who sets foot in the battlefield to raise high the name of Allah.”⁹

Abū Umāmah al-Bāhilī (rta) narrates that a person came to the Prophet (sws) and asked: “What is your opinion about a person who fights for monetary benefits and fame?” The Prophet (sws) replied: “He will gain nothing.” The person repeated his question three times and each time the Prophet (sws) gave the same answer and then said: “The Almighty never accepts a deed until it is pure and done merely to please Him.”¹⁰

Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrates that once the Prophet (sws) said: “The fate of three types of people shall be decided first on the Day of Judgement: A person who was martyred while fighting. The Almighty will remind him of His favours. Once the person remembers them, the Almighty will ask: ‘What did you do for me?’ He will reply: ‘I fought for you until I embraced martyrdom.’ The Almighty will say: ‘You have told a lie; you fought so that people would acknowledge your bravery and that has [already] taken place.’ The Almighty would then order for his punishment and he would be dragged by his face and thrown into Hell.”¹¹

‘Ubādah ibn Sāmit (rta) narrates from the Prophet (sws): “A person who fought in the way of Allah with the intention that he would gain a rope [from the war booty] to tie a camel will only get that rope and nothing else.”¹²

Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal (rta) narrates that once the Prophet (sws) said: “Wars are of two types: a person who fought merely to please Allah, obeyed his ruler in the war, spent the best of his wealth, was affectionate with his fellow fighters and abstained from spreading disorder and evil, then all the time he spent in the war whether he was awake or was asleep – all shall earn reward for him. And a person who fought for fame and to earn the praises of the world and disobeyed his ruler during the war and thereby created disorder, he would not be spared.”¹³

It is this special status of *qitāl* (armed warfare) that makes it an act of great reward for the believers. The Almighty says:

وَلَا تَحْسِبُنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتُلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُمُواًتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ فَرَحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ
مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوْا بِهِمْ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَا حَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَخْرُجُونَ
يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِنِعْمَةِ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيغُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٣: ١٦٩-١٧١)

9. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 466, (no. 2810); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 852, (no. 4919).

10. Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 432, (no. 3142).

11. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 852-853, (no. 4923).

12. Al-Nasā’ī, *Sunan*, 432, (no. 3140).

13. Ibid., 585, (no. 4200).

And do not consider those who are killed in the way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive with their Lord, and they are being provided for. They rejoice in what Allah has bestowed upon them of His bounty and rejoice for the sake of those who have not yet joined them, but are left behind [not yet martyred] that on them too no fear shall come, nor shall they grieve. They rejoice in a grace and a bounty from Allah, and that Allah will not waste the reward of the believers. (3:169-171)

Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrates from the Prophet (sws): “A person who wages *jihād* in the way of Allah – and Allah knows full well who wages *jihād* in His way – is like a person who fasts during the daytime and stands in prayer during the night, and for such a person [who fights in His way], Allah has taken upon Himself to take him to Paradise in case He ordains death for him, [and, if this is not the case,] He will reward him and send him back home safely with the spoils of war.”¹⁴

He also narrates that once a person came to the Prophet (sws) and asked: “Tell me of a deed whose reward is equivalent to that of *jihād*.” The Prophet (sws) replied: “There is no such deed.” The Prophet (sws) then asked that person: “Is it possible for you that once the Mujāhidīn (warriors) depart for *jihād*, you go to the mosque and keep standing in prayer without pausing and also keep fasting [simultaneously] without breaking the fast?” The person replied: “How can anyone do this?”¹⁵

At another instance, Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrates from the Prophet: “There are hundred levels in Paradise which the Almighty has prepared for those who wage *jihād* in His way. Each of these levels is separated from one another with a distance equal to that between the earth and the sky.”¹⁶

Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrates from the Prophet (sws): “I swear by the Almighty that a person who is wounded in the way of Allah – and Allah knows full well who is actually wounded in His way – he shall be raised on the Day of Judgement such that his colour will be the colour of blood with the fragrance of musk around him.”¹⁷

‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Jabr (rta) narrates from the Prophet (sws): “A person whose feet become dust-ridden because of [striving] in the way of Allah will never be touched by the flames of Hell.”¹⁸

Sahl ibn Sa‘d (rta) says that the Prophet (sws) once said: “To reside in a border area for a day to protect [people] against an enemy [invasion] is better than this world and everything it has.”¹⁹

14. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 462, (no. 2787).

15. Ibid., 461, (no. 2785).

16. Ibid., 462, (no. 2790).

17. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 464, (no. 2803); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 841, (no. 4923).

18. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 146, 466, (nos. 907, 2811).

19. Ibid., 478, (no. 2892).

iii. Ethical Limits

The third thing that becomes evident from these verses is that war cannot be waged in the way of Allah by disregarding ethical limits. Moral values have to be given priority over everything in all circumstances, and, even in circumstances of war, the Almighty has not given any person the permission to breach ethical principles. The verses assert that Muslims can fight the enemy and can displace them from the city from which they themselves were displaced and that they should be killed wherever found. Muslims were allowed to take this step because of the reign of oppression and injustice let loose by the enemy and because the truth of Muhammad’s (sws) message had been made manifest to them and they deliberately denied it. However, two things must still remain in their consideration:

Firstly, Muslims should not initiate proceedings to violate anything sacred. Consequently, war is permitted near the Baytullah and in sacred months only if the enemy takes the initiative. Muslims can in no case commence such proceedings.

Secondly, Muslims can answer any excess committed by the enemy by inflicting equal damage only. They have no right to go beyond this. They can wage war, but, in no case, are they allowed to exceed the limits and commit any excesses – for the Almighty is greatly displeased by such an attitude. He only helps those who never cross the limits set by Him in any circumstances.

In the verse under discussion, both these stipulations are discussed by the Qur’ān in its unrivalled style:

السَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَاتُ قَصَاصٌ فَمَنْ اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ يَمْثِلُ مَا اعْتَدَى
عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَتَقْوُا اللَّهَ وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ (٢: ١٩٤)

A sacred month for a sacred month; [similarly] other sacred things too are subject to retaliation. Therefore, if anyone transgresses against you, you should also pay back in equal terms. Have fear of Allah and keep in mind that Allah is with those who remain within the bounds [stipulated by religion]. (2:194)

While explaining this verse, Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, writes:

... this verse implies that fighting in the forbidden months or fighting within the boundaries of the Ḥaram is a major sin. However, if the disbelievers disregard their sanctity, Muslims on account of *qisās* also have the right to strip them off the protection that these sacred entities afford them. The life of every person carries great sanctity in the eyes of the *shari‘ah*. However, when a person violates this sanctity and kills someone, he himself shall be deprived of the right of sanctity for his own life to avenge his own deed. Similarly, the sanctity of the forbidden months and of the Ḥaram itself shall be upheld in all circumstances on the condition that the disbelievers also uphold it and do not oppress and tyrannize people in them. However, if they unsheathe their swords in the forbidden months and in the sacred land of Makkah, then on account of *qisās*, they themselves deserve to be divested of the protection these months and this

land hold for them. The verse goes on to say that just as taking of *qiṣās* for the forbidden months is necessary, the *qiṣās* of other sacred entities must also be taken. In other words, if the disbelievers deprive Muslims of the right of protection that certain sacred things hold for them, Muslims too have the right as a result of *qiṣās* to pay them back in the same coin or measure. Consequently, whatever measures the disbelievers adopt in violation of the sanctity of the Ḥaram and the forbidden months, Muslim too can retaliate – but they must fear God and retaliate on equal footings: they should neither initiate such violations nor exceed the limits while retaliating against any aggression in this regard. Only those people become worthy of Divine Help who are fearful of the Almighty in all circumstances.²⁰

The most important directive that has been spelled out in the sphere of ethical limits is the fulfilment of promises. Breaking a promise is a great sin in the eyes of the Almighty. He has made it amply clear to the Muslims that in both forms of *qitāl* (armed warfare) – that is against injustice and oppression and against the rejecters of truth after the truth has become evident to them – Muslims must not break any treaty contracted with a nation. Sūrah Tawbah is the *sūrah* that announced punishment for those who deliberately rejected Muḥammad (sws) and his message. In this *sūrah*, the Prophet (sws) has been directed to declare null and void all pacts and treaties and embark upon a final assault against the disbelievers; however, it is explicitly stated in the *sūrah* (9:4) that all treaties that have been concluded with a time frame must continue till the time period is over. Similarly, in Sūrah Anfāl, Muslims are emphatically told that even if a nation, with which Muslims are under obligation of a contract, is guilty of oppressing the Muslims in matters of their religion, the Islamic state does not have the right to help these Muslims if this amounts to a breach of contract made with that nation:

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يُهَاجِرُوا مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ وَلَائِتِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ يُهَاجِرُوا وَإِنْ اسْتَنْصَرُوكُمْ فِي
الَّذِينَ فَعَلَيْكُمُ النَّصْرُ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيَانًا وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٧٢: ٨)

And to those who accepted faith but did not migrate [to Madīnah], you owe no duty of protection to them until they migrate; but if they seek your help in religion, it is your duty to help them except against a people with whom you have a treaty of mutual alliance; and Allah sees what you do. (8:72)

On a number of occasions, the Prophet (sws) stressed how dreadful a sin breach of promise is:

Abū Sa‘īd (rta) narrates from the Prophet (sws): “On the Day of Judgement, to proclaim the traitorship of a traitor and the betrayal of a person who betrayed his words, a flag shall be hoisted which would be as high as [the extent of his] traitorship”, and [the Prophet (sws) also said]: “Remember that no traitor or betrayer of promises is greater than the traitor who is the leader and ruler of

20. Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 3, 479.

people.”²¹

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) [once] said: “A person who kills a *mu‘āhid* will not be able to smell [the fragrance] of Paradise, even though its fragrance can be smelt from a place as far off as forty years from it in distance.”²²

However, if Muslims fear any foul play and breach of contract from the opposite side, they, in the words of the Qur’ān, can also terminate the treaty and throw the promise on their faces on equal footings:

وَإِمَّا تَخَافُنَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ خِيَانَةً فَبَنِدِ إِلَيْهِمْ عَلَى سَوَاءٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْخَائِنِينَ (٨:٥٨)

And if you fear any treachery from a people, throw back their covenant to them on equal terms. Certainly, Allah does not like the treacherous. (8:58)

While commenting on this verse, Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, writes:

The words (*‘alā sawā*) mean that Muslims are authorized to pay back their enemy in the same coins. This means that the retaliation from their side must not exceed the harm inflicted upon them. Some people have deduced from these words that the nullification of a treaty should necessarily be declared openly before the other party. I do not find this deduction to be very sound as these words do not support it; however, this much can be inferred that mere speculation should not impel a party to revoke it. This should only be done after some manifest proof of its violation from the other side. The use of the intensive verb (*takhāfannā*) in the verse lays credence to this claim. Moreover, the condition of (*‘alā sawā*) also highlights this aspect.²³

The Prophet (sws) is reported to have explained this aspect in the following words:

مَنْ كَانَ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ قَوْمٍ عَاهَدَ فَلَا يَحُلِّنَ عَهْدًا وَلَا يَشْتَدِّهُ حَتَّى يَمْضِي أَمْدُهُ أَوْ يَبْنِدِ إِلَيْهِمْ عَلَى سَوَاءٍ

If a nation concludes a treaty with some other, it should not change it in any sense until the time period of the treaty expires or if it fears some treachery from the other side. In these cases, it should throw the treaty before it by an open declaration on equal footings.²⁴

Other directives which are mentioned in the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth in this regard are the following:

1. A display of pomp and pride should be avoided when an army sets out for a

21. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 770, (no. 4538).

22. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 527, (no. 3166).

23. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 3, 499.

24. Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr*, vol. 3, 237, (no. 1580).

battle. In Sūrah Anfāl, where the Qur’ān has asked the Muslims to spend more time in the remembrance of God when a war is at hand, it has also asked them to abstain from show and pomosity – something that is the way of people who are inebriated with the pride of their number and the resources and the arsenal they have. Such vanity and conceit are not befitting for the believers. Whether in the battlefield or outside it, the humility of servitude to the Almighty should always be their hallmark. The reason for this is that their war is not mere war – it is serving and worshipping the Almighty, and, at all instances, this fundamental aspect should be taken into account by them:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ حَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بَطَرًا وَرِثَاءَ النَّاسِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ
عَمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ (٤٧:٨)

And be not like those who came out of their homes boastfully and displaying their grandeur and those who stopped [people] from the way of Allah even though Allah fully encompasses what they do. (8:47)

2. People who want to remain neutral in war should be left alone and not be troubled in any way. In Sūrah Nisā, the behaviour of certain Muslims is referred to who, because of their timidity and frailty, were neither willing to fight the Muslims by joining hands with their own nation nor ready to join the Muslims and fight their own nation. The Almighty bade the Muslims to abstain from any action against them:

أَوْ جَاءُوكُمْ حَسَرَتْ صُدُورُهُمْ أَنْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ أَوْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ قَوْمُهُمْ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَسَلَطَهُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ
فَلَقَاتُوكُمْ فَإِنْ اعْتَرُلُوكُمْ فَلَمْ يُعَاتِلُوكُمْ وَأَلْقَوْ إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامَ فَمَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيلًا (٩٠:٤)

Or those who approach you such that they neither have the courage to fight you nor their own people [and are such that] had Allah willed, indeed He would have given them power over you, and they would have fought you. So if they withdraw from you, and fight not against you, and offer you peace, then Allah does not give you permission to take any action against them. (4:90)

3. People who neither take part in a battle nor are able to take part in it – as per the dictates of custom as well as sense and reason – should not be killed. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar (rta) reports from the Prophet (sws) that once in a battle when it became known that a woman had been killed, the Prophet (sws) emphatically forbade the killing of women and children.²⁵

4. People among the enemy should not be killed by setting them ablaze. Abū Hurayrah (rta) narrates that once when the Prophet (sws) bade the Muslims to set out for a battle he named two persons and directed the Muslims to burn them if

25. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 498, (no. 3015); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 772, (no. 4547).

they encountered them. However, when the Muslim army was about to set out, he said: “I had asked you to set two people ablaze; the truth of the matter is that it is only Allah Who can punish someone in this manner; so if you find these two, just kill them.”²⁶

5. Plundering and looting should be abstained from. ‘Abdullāh ibn Yazīd (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) stopped the Muslims from snatching anything from the common people while the Muslim army marches into the enemy territory.²⁷ A person from the Anṣār narrates that once while travelling for a *jihād*, because of great compulsion, some people of the Muslim army snatched some goats to appease their hunger. When the Prophet (sws) came to know about this, he overturned all the utensils and remarked: “plundered [food] is no good than dead meat.”²⁸

6. Dead bodies should not be mutilated. Buraydah (rta) narrates that among the directives the Prophet (sws) would give while sending a Muslim army would be an emphatic assertion to abstain from mutilating dead bodies and from disfiguring them.²⁹

7. Setting up obstructions and robbing travellers is forbidden. Mū‘adh ibn Anas (rta) narrates that once when he and others in the company of the Prophet (sws) embarked upon a campaign of *jihād*, it was observed that people had been obstructing the place where the army was to disembark and were busy robbing the passersby. When this complaint reached the Prophet (sws), he publicly announced at once that any person who obstructs the place of disembarkment and loots the passersby is in fact not doing *jihād*.³⁰

iv. The Ultimate Goal

The fourth thing discussed in the verses (2:190-4) is the ultimate goal of *jihād*. It says that *jihād* should continue until two objectives are totally achieved:

Firstly, فَتْنَة (fitnah) is uprooted.

Secondly, in the Arabian peninsula only Islam reigns supreme.

For the first objective, the words used by the Qur’ān are حَتَّى لَا يَكُونَ فَتْنَة (until fitnah does not remain). Sūrah Anfāl (8:39) also mentions this objective in similar words. فَتْنَة (fitnah) is something which the Qur’ān regards as أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلَ (a greater crime than murder). It means “persecution” (to force a person to give up his religion). It is used in this meaning at a number of places in the Qur’ān. No doubt, it is a crime greater than murder. The Almighty has created this world to test man by giving him the right to freely choose his religion and ideology. Consequently, any person who forces someone to give up his religion is in fact rebelling against the scheme of the Almighty. So when an Islamic state was established in Madīnah, Muslims were directed to take up arms against people

26. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 498, (no. 3016).

27. Ibid., 400, (no. 2474).

28. Abū Dā’ud, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 66, (no. 2705).

29. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 768-769, (no. 4522)

30. Abū Ya‘lā, *Musnad*, vol. 2, 22-23, (no. 1484).

who were responsible for persecuting Muslims and to continue this aggression until persecution was uprooted from Arabia. The following verses forcefully depict this directive:

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنِ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَعْوَلُونَ رَبَّا
أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْقُرْبَى الظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ نَصِيرًا
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ الطَّاغُوتِ فَقَاتَلُوا أَوْلِيَاءَ
الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا (٤: ٦-٧٥)

And what has come over you that you fight not in the cause of Allah, and for those weak, ill-treated and oppressed among men, women, and children whose cry is: “Our Lord! Rescue us from this town of oppressors, and raise for us from You one who will protect, and raise for us from You one who will help.” [You should know that] those who are believers, fight in the cause of Allah, and those who are disbelieves, fight in the cause of Satan. So fight you against the friends of Satan. Ever feeble indeed is the plot of Satan. (4:75-6)

The directive of waging war against “persecution” (فتنة) is mentioned in certain other verses of the Qur’ān as well. No doubt, the age old tradition of forcing people to renounce their religion has almost been eliminated today; however, as long as human beings are human beings, they can always revert to it. Consequently, this is an eternal directive of the Qur’ān. If persecution surfaces at any place on this earth of God, it is imperative upon a Muslim state to root it out if it has the strength and power to do so and help the oppressed by waging war against it. This is an everlasting directive of the Qur’ān for the Muslims and no law of this world can repeal it.

A question arises here: Do other forms of injustice and oppression besides persecution also not entail a similar action? The answer to this question in the opinion of this writer is that all forms of oppression against the life and wealth as well as freedom of opinion and expression of Muslims – should be considered under it in various degrees. Consequently, if a group of Muslims commits unwarranted aggression against some of their brothers and does not desist from it even after all attempts of reconciliation, such a group according to the Qur’ān should be fought with:

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنْ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ افْتَنَاهُمَا فَإِنْ بَعْتُ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَى فَقَاتَلُوا الَّتِي تَبَغِي
حَتَّى تَنْفِيَ إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ فَاءَتْ فَأَصْلِحُوهَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ إِنَّمَا
الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوهَا بَيْنَ أَهْوَيْكُمْ وَأَتَقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ (٤٩: ٩-١٠)

And if two parties or groups among the believers start fighting, then make peace between them both. But if one of them outrages against the other, then fight you against the one which outrages until it complies with the decision of

God. Then if it complies, make reconciliation between them justly, and be equitable because God loves those who are the equitable. The believers are brothers to one another. So make reconciliation between your brothers, and fear Allah that you may receive mercy. (49:9-10)

The directives mentioned in these verses can be summarized thus:

1. If two groups among the Muslims are engaged in a fight with one another, other Muslims should not remain indifferent to this state of affairs and should not think that this matter does not concern them. Similarly, it is improper to support a group merely on the basis of familial or tribal bias. They must support the group who in their opinion is on the right, and, in no way, let such biases form the basis of their support. They must try to fully comprehend the situation, and, then, try to reconcile the two groups.

2. If one of the groups is not willing to reconcile, or, after reconciliation, again resorts to oppression and injustice, then it is the duty of the Muslims that, if they have the power, they should fight this group under the authority of some state. This aggression launched should continue until that group surrenders to the decision the arbitrators have put forth before the two groups. The Qur’ān has used the word أَمْرُ اللَّهِ (the decision of God) for the decision of the arbitrator. This means that if a person defies this decree, he is in fact defying the decree of God.

3. If the two groups show their willingness to reconcile, the Almighty has stressed that neither should any unwarranted lenience be shown to them nor should they be shown injustice in any way. Justice should be the basis of reconciliation and whatever loss a party has incurred, it should be compensated for it.

This directive obviously pertains to the existence of a Muslim state under which such a war can be waged. If Muslims do not have a state, then in such a situation, the Prophet Muhammad (sws) while answering a question raised by Hudhayfah (rta) directed the Muslims to dissociate themselves from such anarchy and disorder:

فُلِتْ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ جَمَاعَةٌ وَلَا إِمَامٌ قَالَ فَاعْتَزِلْ تِلْكَ الْفِرَقَ كُلُّهَا وَلَوْ أَنْ تَعْصِي بَأْصِلِ شَجَرَةٍ حَتَّى
يُدْرِكَ كُلَّ الْمَوْتِ وَأَنْتَ عَلَى ذَلِكَ

I asked: “If there is no state or ruler of the Muslims?” He replied: “In this situation, dissociate yourself from all groups, even if you have to chew the roots of a tree at the time of your death.”³¹

For the second objective, the words used in Sūrah Baqarah and Sūrah Anfāl are يَكُونُ الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ اللَّهُ (God’s religion reigns supreme) and يَكُونُ الدِّينُ اللَّهُ (all of God’s religion reigns supreme) respectively. Prior to them, the word قاتلُوهُمْ (fight them) directs the Muslims to wage war. It is evident from the context that the antecedent of the pronoun هُمْ (them) in this word is the Idolaters of Arabia. Consequently,

31. Al-Bukhārī, Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ, 1221, (no. 7084).

these expressions mean that in the land of Arabia the religion of Islam would reign supreme. This purpose could only have been achieved in two ways: either the followers of all other religions be put to death or they be subdued and subjugated completely. Consequently, after many phases interspersed with periods of both war and peace when the disbelievers were totally humiliated, both these ways were adopted. Muslims were directed to kill the Idolaters of Arabia if they did not accept faith and to let the Jews and Christians live on their own religions if they accepted to pay *jizyah* and live a life of total subjugation to the Islamic state established in Arabia. However, the active adversaries among them were put to death or exiled whenever it became possible.

It has been written at the very beginning of this chapter that the various measures adopted by the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta) including warfare were all Divinely ordained. These measures do not belong to the common *shari‘ah* law of Islam. Rather they belong to a specific law that can be termed as the law of *itmām al-hujjah* (إِتْمَامُ الْحُجَّةِ). This law can be summarized as: when the truth of a *rasūl*’s message is communicated to a people in its ultimate form such that no one has any excuse to deny it, the rejecters of this truth are punished in this very world. The Qur’ān says that the decision for this punishment is made by the Almighty after various phases of the preaching mission of a *rasūl*. These phases include *indhār*,³² *indhār-i ‘ām*,³³ *itmām-i hujjah*³⁴ and *hijrah wa barā’ah*.³⁵ In this way, the divine court of justice of the Almighty is set up in this very world, and the reward of punishment that will take place on the Day of Judgement is rehearsed in this very world. The history of this worldly Judgement as mentioned in the Qur’ān shows that the nature of the punishment meted out is generally of two forms:

In the first case, a *rasūl* has very few companions, and, also does not have a place to migrate. In the second one, he migrates with a considerable number of companions, and, before he even does so, the Almighty arranges for them a territory where they can migrate and live there as its sovereigns with freedom. In both these cases, the established practice of the Almighty regarding His *rusul* manifests itself – the practice which the Qur’ān describes in the following words:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَادِثُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ فِي الْأَذْلَى كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَأَغْلَبِنَّ أَنَا وَرَسُولِي إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ
(٢١-٢٠ : ٥٨)

Indeed those who are opposing Allah and His Messenger are bound to be humiliated. The Almighty has ordained: “I and My messengers shall always prevail.” Indeed Allah is Mighty and Powerful. (58:20-21)

32. Warning.

33. Augmented and pronounced warning.

34. Communicating the truth to the extent that no one among its addressees is left with an excuse to deny it.

35. Migration and acquittal.

In the first case, this humiliation takes the form of Divine punishment that descends upon the adversaries of a *rasūl* in the form of raging storms, cyclones and other calamities, which completely destroy them. It is evident from the Qur’ān that the nations of Noah (sws), Lot (sws), Sāliḥ (sws) and Shu‘ayb (sws) along with some other nations of *rusul* met with this dreadful fate. The only exception to this were the Israelites who were not destroyed because, being the People of the Book, they were basically adherents to monotheism. Their humiliation took the form of constant subjugation to the followers of Jesus (sws) till the Day of Judgement.

In the second case, a *rasūl* and his companions subdue their nation by force, and execute them if they do not accept faith. In this case, his addressees are given some further respite. In this period, the *rasūl* does *itmām al-hujjah* on the inhabitants of the land to which he had migrated. He morally purifies his followers, isolates them from the disbelievers and organizes them in the form of a group, and prepares them for a final onslaught with evil. He also consolidates his political power in the land so that he is able to root out the disbelievers and establish the supremacy of the believers through this political power.

It was this situation which had arisen in the case of the *rasūl* Muhammad (sws). After *itmām al-hujjah*, it was the Jews who were subdued first. They had been granted amnesty because of various pacts. Those among them who violated these pacts were given the punishment of denying a *rasūl* (messenger) of God. The Prophet (sws) exiled the tribe of Banū Qaynuqa‘ to Khaybar and that of Banū Nadīr to Syria.³⁶ Afterwards, the power they wielded at Khaybar was crushed by an attack at their strongholds.³⁷ Prior to this, Abū Rāfi‘ and Ka‘b ibn Ashraf were put to death in their houses.³⁸ The tribe of Banū Qurayzah was guilty of treachery and disloyalty in the battle of Ahzāb.³⁹ When the clouds of war dispersed and the chances of an external attack no longer remained, the Prophet (sws) laid siege around them. When no hope remained, they asked the Prophet (sws) to appoint Sa‘d ibn Mu‘ādh (rta) as an arbitrator to decide their fate. Their request was accepted. Since, at that time, no specific punishment had been revealed in the Qur’ān about the fate of the Jews, Sa‘d announced his verdict in accordance with the Torah. As per the Torah, the punishment for treason was that all men should be put to death; the women and children should be enslaved and the wealth of the whole nation should be distributed among the conquerors.⁴⁰ In accordance with this verdict pronounced, all men were executed.⁴¹ No other incident worthy of

36. Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyah*, vol. 3, 40-42; Ibid. vol. 3, 151-160.

37. Ibid., 255-277.

38. Ibid., 43-48, 215-217; Ibn Sa‘d, *Al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1960), 28.

39. Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyah*, vol. 3, 180-182.

40. Deuteronomy, 20:10-14.

41. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 698-699, (nos. 4121, 4122); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 784-785, (nos. 4596, 4598).

note took place regarding the Jews until in Sūrah Tawbah the final judgement was declared against them:

قَاتَلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ
الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَتَّىٰ يُعْطُوا الْجِزِيَّةَ عَنْ يَدِ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ (٢٩ : ٩)

Fight those from among the People of the Book who believe not in Allah or the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger nor adopt the Religion of Truth as their religion, until they pay the *jizyah* with willing submission and are subdued. (9:29)

This directive related to both the Jews and the Christians. The punishment mentioned in these verses was in fact a show of great lenience to them because of the fact that they were originally adherents to monotheism. In reality, they had become worthy of death and destruction after deliberately denying the truth. However, they did not benefit from this lenience because after the death of the Prophet (sws) they once again resorted to fraud and treachery.⁴² Consequently, the Jews of Khaybar and the Christians of Najrān were exiled once and for all from the Arabian peninsula by the caliph ‘Umar (rta). This exile in fact thus fulfilled the following declaration of the Qur’ān about them:

وَلَوْلَا أَنْ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْجَلَاءَ لَعَذَابُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ أَنَّارٌ (٥٩ : ٣)

And had it not been that Allah had decreed exile for them, He would certainly have punished them in this world; and in the Hereafter theirs shall be the torment of the Fire. (59:3)

When the Idolaters of Arabia had been similarly subdued, it was proclaimed in Sūrah Tawbah that in future no pact would be made with them. They would be given a final respite of four months and then they would be humiliated in retribution of their deeds and would in no way be able to escape from this punishment (the Qur’ān 9:1-2). Consequently, Makkah was conquered and just as some of the active adversaries among them had been executed when they were caught as prisoners in the battle of Badr and Uhud, similarly, at this occasion also such adversaries were put to death. Prior to this, the directive had been revealed about them that it should be proclaimed at the time of the *hajj-i akbar* (9th *hijrah*) that once the forbidden months would be over, Muslims should slay the Idolaters wherever they find them except if they accept faith, establish the prayer and pay *zakāh*. However, those among them who were bound in time bar pacts with Muslims were an exception to this directive. Muslims were asked to honour these

42. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīh*, 447, (no. 2730); Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-Karāj*, *Faṣl fi al-Fay wa al-Kharāj*, 4; Ahmad ibn Yahyā ibn Jābir al-Balādhurī, *Futūh al-buldān* (Qum: Manshūrāt al-arummīyyah, 1404 AH), 73; Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Izz al-Dīn al-Jazāri ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fi al-tārīkh*, 1st ed., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar Beirut, 1965), 112.

contracts until their stipulated time period if their counterparts abided by them. The implication was clear: once the time period expired, these people would also meet the fate that had been ordained for all the Idolaters of Arabia. They were to be killed in case they did not accept faith. This declaration was made in the Qur'ān in the following words:

وَأَدَانَ مِنْ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ إِلَى النَّاسِ يَوْمَ الْحَجَّ الْكَبِيرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ بَرِيءٌ مِنْ الْمُشْرِكِينَ وَرَسُولُهُ فِيَنْ تُبَيَّنُهُمْ
فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ تَوْلِيهِمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ غَيْرُ مُعْجَزِي اللَّهِ وَبَشَّرَ الدِّينَ كَفَرُوا بَعْدَابَ أَلِيمٍ إِلَى
الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ مِنْ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَنْقُصُوكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَمْ يُظَاهِرُوكُمْ أَحَدًا فَاتَّمُوا إِلَيْهِمْ
عَهْدَهُمْ إِلَى مُدَّتِّهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ
وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخُذُّلُوهُمْ وَاحْصُرُوهُمْ وَاقْعُدُوهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْضَدٍ إِنَّ تَائِبُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوْا الزَّكَاةَ
فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٩: ٥-٣)

And a declaration should be made from Allah and His Messenger to these people on the day of the great *hajj* that Allah is free from [all] obligations to these Idolaters and so is His Messenger. So, [O Idolaters!] If you repent, it is better for you, but if you turn away, then know that you cannot escape from the grasp of Allah. And [O Muhammad (sws)!] Give tidings of a painful torment to these disbelievers. Except those of these Idolaters with whom you have a treaty, and who have not shown treachery in it nor have supported anyone against you. So fulfil their treaty to the end of their term. Indeed, Allah loves those who abide by the limits. Then when the sacred months [after the *hajj*] have passed, kill these Idolaters wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them, and lie in wait for them in each and every ambush. But if they repent and are diligent in the prayer, and give *zakāh*, then leave them alone. Indeed, Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most-Merciful. (9:3-5)

With these measures, the basic objective of war stated by the words: يَكُونُ الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ اللَّهُ (all of Allah's religion reigns supreme) was achieved in the ultimate sense. However, during this period the Prophet (sws) presented his message to all the nearby nations outside Arabia.⁴³ By writing letters to the rulers of the nations,⁴⁴ he made it clear upon them that now Islam alone can guarantee existence for them.⁴⁵ This meant that just as the truth had been conclusively communicated through the

43. This happened after the truce of Ḥudaybiyah, when after this pact of peace with the Quraysh, the situation arose in which the Prophet (sws) could extend his preaching endeavours.

44. The names of these heads of states are: 1. Negus of Abyssinia, 2. Maqawwas of Egypt, 3. Khusro Parvez of Persia, 4. Qaysar of Rome, 5. Mundhir ibn Sāwī of Bahrain, 6. Hūdhah ibn 'Alī of Yamāmah, 7. Hārith ibn Abī Shaml of Damascus, 8. Jayfar of Amman.

45. Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-ṣahīḥ*, 485-487, (no. 2941); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi'* *al-ṣahīḥ*, 787-789, (no. 4607).

Prophet (sws) to the Idolaters and the People of the Book of Arabia, it shall also be conclusively communicated before his death to these nations. The obvious outcome of this was that these nations also shall be punished in this world as per the divine law relating to deliberate rejection of the truth communicated to people by their respective messengers. Consequently, this is what happened also and after consolidating their rule in the Arabian peninsula, the Companions (rta) launched attacks against these countries giving them two options if they wanted to remain alive: to accept faith or to accept a life of subjugation by paying *jizyah*. None of these nations was an adherent to polytheism in the real sense, otherwise they would have been treated in the same way as the Idolaters of Arabia.

It is evident from these details that all these armed campaigns and offensives were not merely *qitāl* (war), they were in reality a punishment of the Almighty. This punishment, which is meted out to those who deliberately deny the truth is an established practice of Allah. As a Divine scheme, it descended first upon the Idolaters and the People of the Book of Arabia and then to certain other nations outside it. Consequently, this is absolutely certain that fighting those who have deliberately rejected the truth and forcing the vanquished to lead a life of subjugation by imposing *jizyah* on them is no longer allowed. For Muslims, the sole ground of war is injustice and oppression. They cannot wage war on any other ground.

3. Divine Help

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَرِّضْ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى الْقَتْالِ إِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ عِشْرُونَ صَابِرُونَ يَعْلَمُوْا مِائَتَيْنِ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مَائَةً يَعْلَمُوا أَلْفًا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ الْأَنَّ حَقَّ اللَّهُ عَنْكُمْ وَعَلِمَ أَنَّ فِيْكُمْ ضَعْفًا فَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مَائَةً صَابِرَةً يَعْلَمُوا مِائَتَيْنِ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أَلْفٌ يَعْلَمُوا أَلْفَيْنِ يَا ذَنَّ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ (٨: ٦٥-٦٦)

O Prophet! Rouse the believers to war. If there are twenty amongst you, patient and persevering, they will subdue two hundred: if a hundred, they will subdue a thousand of the disbelievers: for these are a people without insight. Now, God has lightened your burden for He knows that there is now weakness in you: So, if there are a hundred of you, patient and persevering, they will subdue two hundred, and if a thousand, they will subdue two thousand, with the permission of God and [truly] God is with those who patiently persevere [in His cause]. (8:65-66)

Just as these verses of Sūrah Anfāl indicate the extent of the obligation of *jihād*, they also highlight the principle on which Divine Help descends on believers in an armed struggle. They unequivocally state that Divine Help in this matter is governed by a specific law and is not subject to the whims and desires of people. The Almighty has fixed a principle according to which He helps people who set

out for *jihād* and always abides by this principle. A reflection on these verses shows that Divine Help in a war is based on the following three statutes:

Firstly, the basic thing that entitles people to Divine Help is perseverance and resolution. No group of Muslims becomes entitled to it unless it has this quality in it. A battalion of Muslims devoid of this quality should not expect Divine Help when it faces the enemy. The words صَابِرُونَ (*sābirūn*) and صَابِرَةٍ (*sābirah*) of the above quoted verses allude to this reality. Moreover, the words وَ اللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ (God is with those who persevere) at the end of the verse also bear evidence to this fact.

Secondly, an army must be equipped with proper military strength if it is to wage war. No doubt, whatever happens, happens because of God’s will and one must fully repose one’s trust in Him, but this is also a reality that the Almighty has created this world on certain laws. The scheme behind these laws dictates that whatever measures are adopted for doing good and virtuous deeds, they must have the backing of necessary resources. What are these means and resources? A ratio between Muslim and enemy forces has been put forth in these verses by the Almighty. If this has not been achieved, then efforts should be made by the Muslims to achieve it. If they wage *jihād* by ignoring this ratio by succumbing to emotions, they themselves would be responsible for such a rash step. Such a step would, of course, not be entitled to any Divine Help.

Thirdly, it is the force of faith that compensates for any lack of material force. The words عَلِمَ أَنْ فِيْكُمْ ضَعْفًا (He knows that there is now weakness among you) and يَا أَيُّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقِهُونَ (for these are a people without insight) bear reference to this inference. The word ضَعْفٌ (*da’f*) in Arabic is not only used for material and physical weakness but also for weakness in faith and belief. Similarly, the meaning of the words لَا يَفْقِهُونَ used in contrast to the strength of faith imply a weakness in faith and belief. The verse, consequently, says that since the disbelievers are devoid of true faith and belief while, on the other hand, the believers possess them, the believers would be the victors even if outnumbered by 1:10.

It is evident from the context of the *sūrah* that the ratio stated is of the period of the battle of Badr. After this battle, many people entered the folds of Islam – people who were not as strong in faith and resolve as those who had been the سَابِقُونَ الْأُولُونَ (the pioneer converts). Though Muslims greatly increased in numbers as a result of these conversions, yet the level and extent of faith decreased overall since the converts were nevertheless not as strong in their faith as the سَابِقُونَ الْأُولُونَ (the pioneer converts). Consequently, the Almighty Himself informed the Muslims that now this ratio had decreased to 1:2 from the original 1:10.

Finally, it needs to be appreciated that the ratios stated in these verses are about the Companions (rta) of the Prophet (sws) – who were a group of noble souls who waged *jihād* alongside the Prophet (sws), and as a result of a direct command of the Almighty. In later times, it can be estimated whether this ratio has increased or decreased keeping in view the extent of faith Muslims have.

4. Captives of War

فَإِذَا لَقِيْتُمُ الظَّالِمِينَ كَفَرُوا فَضْرِبُ الرِّقَابِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَنْخَتُمُوهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَثَاقَ فَإِمَّا مَنْ بَعْدُ وَإِمَّا فِدَاءً
حَتَّىٰ يَضْعَفَ الْحَرْبُ أَوْ زَارَهَا (٤٧:٤٧)

So, when you meet [in the battlefield] those who disbelieve, strike off their heads. Then, when you have shed their blood fully, bind them [as captives]. Thereafter, free them as a favour or free them with ransom until war lays down its weapons. (47:4)

It is evident from the words of this verse that until its revelation wars with the disbelievers had not begun, though circumstances had reached the extent that they could begin anytime. Muslims are told that if they encounter the disbelievers of Arabia, who had rejected the truth in spite of being convinced about it, in the battle field they must slay them. They deserve no lenience after such a blatant denial of the truth which had been unveiled to them by the Prophet (sws) in its ultimate form. Muslims must rout their power when they meet them in the battlefield and capture those who survive. They should know that the help of the Almighty is with them and the enemy would not be able to harm them. After that, if they want to set free the captives, they can either set them free as a favour to them or set them free after accepting some ransom. This is the attitude they should adopt until warfare with the disbelievers ends in Arabia.⁴⁶

Although this directive is stated in the *sūrah* with reference to the *mushrikūn* of Arabia, nothing in it restricts its application to them only. Therefore, it will apply to other combatants – whether of those times or of later – as well.

The words that have been used to state this directive read as: فَإِمَّا مَنْ بَعْدُ وَإِمَّا فِدَاءً (thereafter free them as a favour or free them with ransom). Those who have a flare for the language know that if the word فِدَاء (fidā'an) here means to set free a captive after accepting ransom, then since the word مَنَّ (mannañ) is placed in contrast to it, مَنَّ (mannañ) should convey the opposite meaning: that is to set them free without accepting any ransom as a favour. The word مَنَّ (mannañ) here is a verbal noun of a suppressed verb and since it does not occur in contrast to قَتْل (murder), and in contrast to فِدَاء (fidā'an), it can only and only mean the setting free of captives without accepting any ransom money. It is evident from the words فَشُدُّوا الْوَثَاقَ (then bind them) that Muslims could certainly keep those captured as captives; however, they could neither kill them nor keep them as slaves come what may.

Three types of captives, however, were an exception to this rule:

1. Brutal adversaries about whom the verdict of God was that according to the dictates of the law of *itmām al-hujjah*⁴⁷ they were required to be slain wherever

46. This has been stated because once warfare ends with them, the only option for them would be to either accept faith or face death.

47. Communicating the truth to the extent that no one is left with any excuse to deny it.

found. Examples of people who were killed as a result were ‘Uqbah ibn Abī Mu‘īt, Naḍr ibn Ḥārith⁴⁸ and Abū ‘Azzah⁴⁹ – the captives of the battles of Badr and Uhud. Similarly, at the conquest of Makkah, certain others were also slain as an exception to the general amnesty granted because of their open enmity.⁵⁰

2. The captives of the Banū Qurayzah who met a fate decided by an arbitrator appointed by themselves: their men were slain and their women and children were sold as slaves.⁵¹

3. Captives who were slaves prior to their capture and, on certain instances, were distributed among people as slaves.⁵²

It is obvious that these three cases were exceptions, and the directive stated in the above quoted verse never related to them. Consequently, if all the incidents of the Prophet’s times regarding prisoners of war are studied, it can be safely concluded that barring these three exceptions everything done was in conformity with the above quoted directive of Sūrah Muḥammad.

Following are the details:

1. As long as the prisoners remained in captivity of the state authorities, they were treated in a befitting manner. It is known that the prisoners of Badr were distributed among the Companions (rta) and the Prophet (sws) himself directed the Companions (rta) in the words: إسْتُوْصُوْ بِالْأَسَارِيْ خَيْرًا (treat these prisoners well).⁵³ One of the prisoners Abū ‘Azīz says that he was kept in a house of the Anṣār tribe. He goes on to say that his hosts fed him with *chapātī* while they themselves just ate dates.⁵⁴ When Thumāmah ibn Uthāl, a chief of Yamāmah, was taken into custody, he, at the behest of the Prophet (sws), was fed with good food and milk as long as he remained in captivity.⁵⁵

2. Most prisoners of the battle of Badr were set free after accepting ransom from them. Those among them who could pay in cash were exacted a ransom that ranged from one thousand to four thousand *dirhams* per prisoner, while those among them who were not in a position to pay this amount were set free if they taught ten children each from among the Anṣār to read and write. Abū Sufyan’s son, ‘Amr, was set free in exchange for Sa‘d ibn Nu‘mān whom he had imprisoned.⁵⁶ Among the captives of the battle of Banī Muṣṭaliq, Juwayriyah was

48. Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyah*, vol. 2, 215.

49. Ibid., vol. 3, 83.

50. Ibid., vol. 4, 41.

51. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 698-699, (no. 4122); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 785, (no. 4598); Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyah*, vol. 3, 188-189, 192.

52. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, (no. 3144); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 729, 792, (nos. 4294, 4621); Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyah*, vol. 4, 105.

53. Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyah*, vol. 2, 217.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid., vol. 4, 215.

56. Ibn Sa‘d, *Al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā*, vol. 2, 22; Ibn Hishām *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyah*, vol. 2, 221.

freed after her father, Hārith ibn Abī Dārār paid the ransom money.⁵⁷ Once Abū Bakr (rta) was sent on a military campaign. Among the captives, there was a beautiful lady. The Prophet (sws) sent her to Makkah and was able to win the freedom of many prisoners in lieu of her.⁵⁸ Similarly, a prisoner of the Banī ‘Aqīl was sent to Tā’if and in lieu of him, two prisoners in the custody of the Banū Thaqīf were released.⁵⁹

3. Some captives were set free without any ransom. Among the captives of Badr, Abū al-‘Āṣ, Muṭṭalab ibn Ḥanṭab, Wahb ibn ‘Umayr ibn Wahb and Abū ‘Azzah were set free like this.⁶⁰ At the time of the truce of Hūdaybiyyah, about 80 people from Makkah suddenly attacked the Muslims at night from the direction of Tan‘im. All of them were caught and the Prophet (sws) set them free without any ransom money as well.⁶¹ Thumāmah ibn Uthāl, referred to earlier, was also set free on similar grounds.⁶²

4. On some occasions, the prisoners were distributed among people so that they could directly deal with them or their relatives on the principle of فِي مَا مَنَّا بَعْدُ وَإِمَّا فَدَاءٌ (thereafter free them as a favour or free them with ransom), the prisoners of the battle against the Banī Muṣṭaliq, were distributed thus. However, once the Prophet (sws) married Jawayriyah after she had been set free, all the Muslims set free the prisoners in their custody without any ransom saying that these prisoners had now become the relatives of the Prophet (sws). Prisoners from about one hundred families were released in this way.⁶³ The prisoners of the military campaign against the Hawāzin tribe were also similarly set free by the Prophet (sws) without taking any ransom from the people.⁶⁴ Similar was the case of the prisoners of the Hunayn battle. When the tribe of Hawāzin came to buy the freedom of their prisoners, it came to their knowledge that all their prisoners had been distributed. At their request, the Prophet (sws) gathered all Muslims among whom these prisoners had been distributed. When all had assembled, the Prophet (sws) expressed his opinion that as these people who had come to fetch the prisoners had repented, everyone should release the prisoners they had in custody. He further said that whoever wanted to set them free without any ransom should do so, and others who wanted ransom would be granted the ransom by the state treasury. As a result of this request, 6000 prisoners were set free, and those among the Muslims who demanded ransom were paid by the state treasury.⁶⁵

57. Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyah*, vol. 3, 232.

58. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 777, (no. 4573); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 64, (no. 2697).

59. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 720, (no. 4245); Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr*, vol. 3, 227-228, (no. 1568); Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 5, 588, 597, (nos. 19326, 19378).

60. Ibn Hishām *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyah*, vol. 2, 228; Ibid., vol. 3, 50.

61. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 811, (no. 4679); Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 61, (no. 2688).

62. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 741-742, (no. 4372); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 782-783, (no. 4589).

63. Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyah*, vol. 3, 231.

64. Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Sīrah al-nabawiyah*, vol. 3, 453.

65. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 730, (nos. 4318-4319); Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-*

5. Widows and other helpless women among these prisoners who had been similarly distributed were generally set free by the respective owners and married to them on the basis of their free consent. On these very grounds, the marital knot was tied between Ṣafiyah (rta) and the Prophet (sws).⁶⁶

5. Spoils of War

يَسْأَلُوكُمْ عَنِ الْأَنْفَالِ قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَنْفَالَ لِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَصْلِحُوا دَارَتِكُمْ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (٨:١)

They ask you about the spoils of war. Say: The spoils belong to Allah and the Prophet. Therefore, if you are true believers, fear Allah and reform your personal relationships, and obey Allah and His Prophet. (8:1)

A look at the context of this verse and at the issues discussed in the *sūrah* of which it is a part shows that after the very first battle which the Muslims fought against the Idolaters of Makkah, the issue of the distribution of the spoils of war came to surface. There existed a difference of opinion about it among the Muslims. The Qur’ān admonished the Muslims on this attitude and gave its verdict in this matter. Muslims were told that they had no claim in the spoils because of the peculiar nature of these wars. They were informed that all these spoils belonged to Allah and His Prophet (sws) and as such they had discretionary powers as far as their disbursement was concerned. This writer has already delineated the reason for this: these wars were fought under a specific law of the Almighty, according to which He, through His messengers, punishes people who deliberately deny the truth. These messengers and their companions in this matter are no more than agents of the implementation of this Divine scheme. It is with the special help of the Almighty through His angels that these battles were actually won. It was for this very reason that Muslims did not have any share in the booty obtained from these wars. However, in spite of this, they are told later in the *sūrah* that only one-fifth of it will be used by the Almighty and His Prophet (sws) for collective needs. The rest of it will be distributed among the soldiers:

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ خُمُسُهُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ (٤١:٨)

And you should know that a fifth of the spoils you get hold of are for Allah and the Prophet and his near relatives and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer. (8:41)

nabawiyah, vol. 4, 104-106.

66. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 713, (no. 4201); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 600, (no. 3497)

It is evident from this distribution that since the believers had also assisted in acquiring them by using their personal weapons, camels and horses as well as food, camps and various other items needed during these wars, it was necessary to give them their due from these spoils. Consequently, in military campaigns, where the services of Muslim soldiers and combatants were not used, they were told that all the booty obtained would be used for the collective purposes of the state and religion and for the poor and needy: none of it would be given to the soldiers:

وَمَا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرْبَىٰ فَلِلَّهِ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ (٥٩:٧)

And whatever the Almighty has bestowed on His Prophet from the people of the cities, it is reserved for Allah and His Prophet and the relatives of the Prophet and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarers. (59:7)

The above quoted verse as well as the verse of Sūrah Anfāl quoted earlier explain the heads of the collective needs for which the war booty was reserved.

First and foremost, the share of the Almighty is stated. God Almighty is above all needs and does not need anything. His share is actually reserved for the requirements of His religion. Consequently, under this head, wealth will be expended on fulfilling such needs as helping the cause of Islam at the state level as an obligation. This includes measures that protect and promote it.

The second share stated is that of the Prophet (sws). Besides carrying out his duties as a Messenger, he was also the head of the Islamic state and as such spent every moment of his life in discharging them. To earn a livelihood while discharging these duties was not possible for him. In these circumstances, it was necessary that he be granted a share in the spoils of war. Of course, the nature of this share was such that it was not given to him in his personal capacity so that it may be distributed among his heirs after him. Consequently, after his death, this share was expended by the state on his behalf and in his prophetic capacity to fulfil the collective needs of the Muslims.

The third share stated is that of the near relatives. Obviously, by these are meant those relatives who were dependent on the Prophet (sws) for their livelihood and about the fulfilment of whose needs the Prophet (sws) considered himself to be morally responsible. He was a father to all Muslims. Consequently, this responsibility too, in accordance with the dictates of both the *sharī‘ah* and social conventions, was transferred to the state after the Prophet (sws) and his kin remained the recipients of this share as long as they lived.

The fourth share is that of the poor, the orphans and the wayfarers. While stating this share, the particle ل (lām) is not repeated in this verse. This particle is appended to all the three shares stated before. This fourth category of shares is actually mentioned under the third stated share of the near relatives. The reason is to honour the recipients of this category as if they are also the near relatives of the

Prophet (sws). This head needs no explanation. A society which is not sensitive to the requirements of these sections, and a society in which the orphans are subjected to misery and in which there is no one to take care of the wayfarers cannot in any way be given the noble name of an Islamic society.

It is evident from this discussion regarding the spoils of war that they are essentially reserved for the collective requirements of the Muslims. The combatants of the Muslim army have not been granted any fixed share in the spoils of war by the Almighty. In this regard, a state has discretionary powers which it can exercise keeping in view the circumstances.

The Penal Sharī‘ah

The opportunity a man has to exercise his will is one of the greatest favours the Almighty has blessed him with. However, just as this freedom is a source of honour for him, its misuse is a source of dishonour for him because from every instance of misuse emanates evil and disorder. This is precisely what the angels had feared when the Almighty informed them about his intention to create man:

أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدَّمَاءَ؟ (٣٠:٢)

[Allah!] Will You create someone who will spread evil in the earth and shed blood? (2:30)

In the history of mankind, the first manifestation of this evil took place through the hands of Cain, the son of Adam. Consequently, out of this incident arose the need to protect man from the evil of man. It was evident from the norms of sense and reason vested by the Almighty in human nature that the only way to shield man from such evil was to reform his environment and educate and urge and train and instruct people; however, once a crime is committed, the solution is to administer appropriate punishment. What then should be the nature and extent of punishment of a specific crime? Since there is no basis in human intellect to determine these parameters, the Almighty Himself revealed His directives about these issues. Through His prophets, He gave mankind His *sharī‘ah*, in which, besides other decrees, He divinely ordained the punishments of all the grave crimes concerning life, wealth, honour and the collective system of a society.

These major crimes are:

1. *Muḥārabah*
2. Murder and Injury
3. Theft
4. Fornication
5. *Qadhf* (accusing someone of Fornication)

It should remain in consideration at the outset that the directive which contains these punishments is addressed to the Muslims in their collective capacity and not in their individual capacity. This is an obvious fact. For this very reason, the *sūrahs* in which these punishments are mentioned were revealed in Madīnah where a

Muslim state had already been established under the rule of the Prophet (sws). Consequently, a group of persons who is not at the helm of affairs of a country has no right to administer these punishments. In the ‘urf (usage) of the Qur’ān, the words فاجلدو (flog [the criminal]) and فاقطعوا (amputate [the hands of the criminal]) of these verses are addressed to the rulers of the Muslims; no one else can be regarded as their addressee. Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ writes in his *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*:

وقد علم من قرع سمعه هذا الخطاب من أهل العلم ان المخاطبين بذلك هم الائمة دون عامة
الناس فكان تقديره : فليقطع الائمة والحكام ايديهم وليحولها الائمة و الحكام

Any learned person who comes across these words, immediately understands that the rulers of an Islamic State are its addressees and not the common Muslims. Consequently, the implied words, for example, are: “the rulers should amputate their hands,” and “the rulers should flog them.”¹

These are the crimes whose punishments have been divinely ordained by the *shari’ah*. The punishments of the lesser forms of the crimes mentioned above, and the punishments of other crimes have been left by the *shari’ah* to the discretion of those in authority with one exception: the death sentence, according to the Qur’ān, can only be given to a person who has killed someone or to someone who is guilty of spreading anarchy in the society. The Almighty has made it amply clear that when the Israelites were given the *shari’ah* He had ordained at that time that except for these two offences neither a person nor a government has the right to kill a person.² The Qur’ān says:

مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِعَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَانُوا مَقْتُلَ النَّاسِ جَمِيعًا (٣٢:٥)

He who killed a human being without the latter being guilty of killing another or of spreading anarchy in the land should be looked upon as if he had killed all mankind. (5:32)

In the following paragraphs, I will explain the verses of the Qur’ān that mention these punishments of the *shari’ah*.

1. Muḥārabah

إِنَّمَا حَرَاءُ الدِّينِ يُحَارِبُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا أَنْ يُفْتَنُوا أَوْ يُصَلَّبُوا أَوْ تُنَقَّطَعَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ مِنْ خَلَافٍ أَوْ يُنَفَّوْ مِنْ الْأَرْضِ ذَلِكَ لَهُمْ حَزْنٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ إِلَى الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ قَبْلٍ أَنْ تَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٣٤-٣٣: ٥)

1. Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 3, 283.

2. A person living in the system of a state becomes authorized for this only in his own defence or in someone else’s defence. (Translator)

The punishments of those who wage war against Allah and His Prophet and strive to spread anarchy in the land are to execute them in an exemplary way or to crucify them or to amputate their hands and feet from opposite sides or to banish them from the land. Such is their disgrace in this world, and in the Hereafter, theirs will be an awful doom except those who repent before you overpower them, then you should know that Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Ever-Merciful. (5:33-34)

If in a state ruled by a messenger of God people challenge the authority of any of his directives or decisions, then this is waging war against Allah and His Prophet (*muḥārabah*). Similarly, spreading anarchy and disorder in the land refers to the situation when an individual or a group of individuals rebels against the law and attacks the life, wealth, honour and freedom of expression of people. Consequently, when murder becomes terrorism, fornication becomes rape and theft assumes the form of robbery or people take to prostitution, become notorious for their ill-ways and vulgarity, become a threat to honourable people because of their immoral and dissolute practices, or rise against the government in rebellion, or create a law and order situation for the government by indulging in hijacking, vandalism and intimidation and by committing other similar crimes, then such people are criminals of spreading anarchy in the society.

The following four punishments are specifically prescribed for such criminals:

- i. *Taqtil* (تفتيل)
- ii. *Taslīb* (تصليب): Crucifixion
- iii. Amputating limbs from opposite sides
- iv. *Nafī* (نفي): Exile

Their explanation follows:

i. *Taqtil* (تفتيل)

The words أَنْ يُقَاتَلُوا (*an yuqattalū*) are used for it and imply that not only should the criminals of this category be executed but the execution should be carried out in a manner that serves as a severe warning to others. The reason is that here the word *taqtil* has been used instead of *qatl*. In Arabic, *taqtil* means to execute someone in such a way that there is severity in the process of killing him. Consequently, it is a requisite of this directive that such criminals be executed in such a manner that others are able to learn a lesson from this. In the opinion of this writer, the punishment of *rajm* (stoning to death) is one form of *taqtil*. The Prophet (sws) in his own times, in accordance with this directive, administered this punishment to certain criminals guilty of fornication.

ii. *Taslīb* (تصليب): Crucifixion

This word, like *taqtil*, is also from the category (*taf’il*) category. Consequently, it implies that criminals should be crucified in an exemplary manner. The cross on which crucifixion takes place is an erected structure upon which a criminal is nailed through his hands and feet and abandoned till death. This form of

punishment, no doubt, is exemplary but the word *taṣlīb* demands that other means which make it still more exemplary may also be adopted.

iii. Amputating Limbs from Opposite Sides

It is evident that this form of punishment also serves as a severe warning to others. The purpose of this punishment is that if the criminal is allowed to live, then he should serve as a reminder and an example before the society and also remain incapacitated to commit future evil.

iv. Nafī (نَفِي): Exile)

It is obvious that this punishment of exile is the least in intensity in this category of punishments. The first two punishments end a criminal's life. The third punishment though does not end his life, makes him an example in the society; however, this fourth punishment without harming his body in anyway, only deprives him of his house and country. The words of the Qur'ān require that in general circumstances this punishment should be carried out in its true form. However, if in some cases, this is not possible, the directive shall stand fulfilled if the criminal is confined in a particular area or kept under house arrest.

Since each of the punishments mentioned in the verse is separated from the other by the particle 'أو' (or), it is evident that the Qur'ān has given an Islamic government the flexible authority to administer any of these punishments keeping in view the nature and extent of the crime, the circumstances of the criminal in which he has committed it and the consequences which it produces or can produce in a society. The relatively lighter punishment of *nafī* is placed with the two very severe punishments of *taqtil* and *taslib* so that if circumstances are such that the criminal deserves any leniency, he should be given it. Consequently, in accordance with this verse, the Prophet (sws), while taking into consideration the circumstances and the nature of crime in his own times, granted remission to certain criminals guilty of debauchery by exiling them; similarly, while obeying this verse, he stoned to death certain others who did not deserve any leniency.

The Prophet's inquiry regarding the marital status of criminals guilty of fornication and profligacy was also based on the pretext of whether the criminal deserved any leniency. Our jurists have erroneously inferred from the Prophet's inquiry that the marital status of a person was actually the basis of the punishment and on this basis maintain that the directive of administering a hundred stripes (the punishment of fornication as mentioned in Sūrah Nūr) was abrogated for married people who indulged in adultery. Actually, the Prophet (sws) while deciding the fate of such criminals asked many questions to see whether they deserved any mitigation. The question of an offender's marital status was one such question, but our jurists concluded that it was the only question asked and, hence, made it the basis of the punishment. They, thereby, incorporated in the penal code of Islam a totally baseless addition, which is against the Qur'ān as well as the norms of sense and reason.

In the words of Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī:

... in such circumstances, the fact that the criminal gang has harmed wealth and property is not the only aspect which should be considered; the objectives of such criminals, the site of their crime, its consequences and circumstances should also be considered. For example, if the circumstances are such that a war is going on or lawlessness is rampant, a stern measure is required. Similarly, if the site of crime is a border area or an abode of enemy intrigue and conspiracy, again an effective action is needed. If the leader of the gang is a very dangerous person, who if shown any leniency, would endanger the life, wealth and honour of many people, then also a severe step is required. In short, the real basis of selection between these punishments is not the mere happening of such a crime, but the collective influence of the crime and welfare of the society.³

Consequently, about certain habitual criminals of fornication, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

خُدُوا عَنِي خُدُوا عَنِي خُدُوا عَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَيِّلًا الْبِكْرُ بِالْبِكْرِ جَلْدٌ مِائَةٌ وَنَفْعٌ سَنَةٌ
وَالشَّيْبُ بِالشَّيْبِ جَلْدٌ مِائَةٌ وَالرَّجْمُ

Acquire it from me, acquire it from me, acquire it from me. The Almighty has revealed a way for these women. In such crimes, unmarried men and women would be punished alike, and their punishment is a hundred stripes and one year exile. Similarly, married men and women would be punished alike, and their punishment is a hundred stripes and death by stoning.⁴

In this Ḥadīth, the reference جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ is to those women about whom the following temporary directive had been given in Sūrah Nisā’:

وَاللَّاتِي يَأْتِينَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمْ فَاسْتَشْهِدُوْا عَلَيْهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةً مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ شَهِدُوْا فَأَمْسِكُوْهُنَّ فِي الْبُيُوتِ حَتَّى
يَتَوَفَّاهُنَّ الْمَوْتُ أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَيِّلًا (١٥:٤)

And upon those of your women who commit fornication, call in as witnesses⁵ four people among yourselves to testify over them; if they testify confine them to their homes till death overtakes them or God formulates another way for them. (4:15)

The style and construction of the phrase وَاللَّاتِي يَأْتِينَ الْفَاحِشَةَ (those women who commit fornication) clearly indicates that prostitutes are being referred to. Since in this case the main offender is the woman, men are not given any mention.⁶ The

3. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 2, 506.

4. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 749, (no. 4414).

5. ie. those who can bear witness that these women are in fact prostitutes who habitually commit fornication.

6. It is by not understanding this fact that the verse has been a subject of an unresolved

Prophet (sws) while deciding the fate of such criminals said that since they were not merely guilty of fornication but were also guilty of spreading disorder in the society as they had adopted profligacy as a way of life, those among them who deserved any mitigation should be administered the punishments of a hundred stripes according to the second verse of Sūrah Nūr because of committing fornication and exiled according to verse 33 of Sūrah Mā’idah to protect the society from their dissolute practices, and those among them who did not deserve any leniency, should be stoned to death according to the directive of *taqtil* of the same verse of Sūrah Mā’idah.

The words “unmarried” and “married” of the Ḥadīth quoted above (*Muslim, Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 749, (no. 4414)) are meant to explain this very principle. A hundred stripes are mentioned with *rajm* (stoning to death) merely to explain the law. Ahādīth verify that the Prophet (sws) mentioned this punishment of a hundred stripes with *rajm* but never actually administered them. The reason is that adding any other punishment to the punishment of death is against legal ethics. The punishments of whipping, jailing the offender and exacting a fine from him are given for two purposes: to make him a means of severe warning for the society and to severely admonish him for his future life. In the case of death sentence, obviously, there is no need for further admonition. Hence, if a criminal is to be punished for various crimes and the death penalty is one of the punishments, all the punishments are stated in the judgement but generally, in practice, only the death sentence is carried out.

The plurals يُحَارِبُونَ (they strive) and يَسْعَوْنَ (they wage war) mentioned in the verse point out that if a gang of criminals has committed the crime, the punishment shall not be given to only some of the criminals but to the gang as a whole. Consequently, if a gang of criminals is guilty of spreading disorder in the land and commits such crimes as murder, hijacking, fornication, sabotage and intimidation, there is no need to investigate exactly who among the gang actually committed the crime. Every member of the gang shall be held responsible for it and dealt with accordingly.

The words ذَلِكَ لَهُمْ خُرُوبٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا (such is their disgrace in this world) used in the verse indicate that while inflicting punishment upon such criminals no feelings of sympathy should arise. The Almighty who created them has ordained complete disgrace and humiliation for them, if they commit such crimes. This is the very purpose of this punishment and should always be taken in consideration. In the words of Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī:

... their humiliation in this world will be a means of severe warning for others and for those who do not respect the law on the mere grounds that laws deserve respect and as such are useful in maintaining order and discipline in the society. In present times, the conceptions of sympathy and mercy for crimes and criminals have taken the shape of a whole philosophy. It is due to their courtesy

that though today it seems as if man is developing and progressing in various fields of life, yet he is creating for himself a Hell on earth. Islam does not encourage such absurd philosophies. Its law is not based upon fantasies but upon human nature.⁷

The words إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَأْبُوا مِنْ قَبْلٍ أَنْ تَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِمْ (except those who repent before you overpower them) of the verse impose the condition that if such criminals come forward and give themselves up to the law before the government lays hands on them, then they shall be dealt with as common criminals. They will not be regarded as criminals of *muḥārabah* or spreading disorder. To quote Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī:

... these special powers should only be used against those rebellious people who insist on their rebellion before the government is able to seize them and the government had to actually subdue them by force. However, those criminals who repent and mend their ways before any action by the government shall not be dealt with according to their former status and shall be dealt with according to the ordinary law about such crimes. If they have usurped the rights of common citizens, compensation shall be provided to these citizens.

If the stress of the words فَاعْلَمُوا (then you should know) is understood, it becomes clear that no measure of retaliation by the government is permitted if the criminals repent and reform themselves before the government captures them. The Almighty is Merciful and Forgiving; if He forgives a person who repents before he comes in the grip of the law, why should His servants adopt a different attitude?⁸

Here, it should remain clear that those who confess simply because they have no means to escape the law are an entirely different case. In their case, the government, indeed, has the authority to refuse any mitigation.

2. Murder and Injury

i. Intentional

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُنْتَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِصَاصُ فِي الْفَتْنَى الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرُّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ وَالْأَنْثَى بِالْأَنْثَى فَمَنْ عُفِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخْيَهِ شَيْءٌ فَاتَّبِعُ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدْعُ إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ ذَلِكَ تَخْفِيفٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ فَمَنْ اعْتَدَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيَاةٌ يَا أَوْلَى الْأَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ (١٧٩-١٧٨: ٢)

7. Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 2, 507.

8. Ibid., vol. 2, 508.

Believers! Decreed for you is the *qisās* of those among you who are killed. If such a murderer is a free-man, then this free-man should be killed in his place and if he is a slave, then this slave should be killed in his place and if the murderer is a woman, then this woman shall be killed in her place. Then for whom there has been some remission from his brother, [the remission can be accepted; however it] should be followed according to the *ma'rūf* and *diyat* should be paid with kindness. This is a concession and a mercy from your Lord. After this, whoever exceeds the limits shall be in a torment afflictive. And there is life for you in *qisās* O men of insight that you may follow the limits set by Allah. (2:178-179)

Just as this directive of *qisās* has been given to us, it was given to the previous nations of the prophets. While referring to the Old Testament, the Qur'ān says:

وَكَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِيهَا أَنَّ النَّفْسَ بِالنَّفْسِ وَالْعَيْنَ بِالْعَيْنِ وَالْأَنْفَ بِالْأَنْفِ وَالْأَذْنَ بِالْأَذْنِ وَالسَّمْنَ بِالسَّمْنِ وَالْجُرُوحَ
قِصَاصٌ فَمَنْ تَصَدَّقَ بِهِ فَهُوَ كَفَارَةٌ لَهُ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (٤٥:٥)

And We enjoined for them therein: life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth, wound for wound. Then he who forgoes, then this shall be an atonement for his own self. And those who do not judge according to what Allah has revealed, it is they who are the wrongdoers. (5:45)

It is evident from this verse that this directive of *qisās*, not only pertains to murder but also relates to wounding or injuring someone. According to the Qur'ān, all these crimes are heinous but as far as murder is concerned, the Qur'ān says that murdering a person is like murdering the whole mankind:

مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِعَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَانَ إِنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا (٣٢:٥)

He who killed a human being without the latter being guilty of killing another or of spreading disorder in the land should be looked upon as if he killed all mankind. (5:32)

Furthermore, the Qur'ān says that a person who commits such a grave offence, particularly against a Muslim, shall face the eternal punishment of Hell:

وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَغَضِيبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعْنَهُ وَأَعْدَدَ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا (٩٣:٤)

And he who intentionally kills a believer, his reward is Hell. He shall abide therein forever, and the wrath and the curse of God are upon him. He has prepared for him a dreadful doom. (4:93)

Consequently, the duties and responsibilities which this type of murder imposes on us as Muslims can be summed up in the following words of Imām Amīn

Ahsan Islāhī:

Firstly, every occurrence of murder should create a tumult and commotion in the nation. Until and unless *qisās* is taken from the criminal responsible for it, everyone should feel that he no longer has the protection of the law he formerly had. The law is the protector of all and if it has been violated, a single person has just not been slain, but the lives of all persons are in danger.

Secondly, to search for the murderer is not just the responsibility of the heirs of the murdered person, but of the whole nation as it is not that just one life has been taken – rather all the lives have been taken.

Thirdly, if a person finds someone in danger, he should not ignore the situation by thinking that he is interfering in someone’s affairs; rather he should defend and protect him as much as he can, even if he has to endure difficulties; for a person who defends an aggrieved and oppressed person, in fact, defends humanity of which he himself is a part.

Fourthly, a person who hides someone’s murder, or bears false evidence in favour of the murderer or stands surety for him, or gives refuge to him or legally pleads for him, or intentionally excuses him, in fact, does so for the murder of his own self, his father, his brother, and his son because the murderer of one is the murderer of all.

Fifthly, to help the government or the heirs of the slain person in taking *qisās* is like giving a life to the slain person because, according to the Qur’ān, there is life in *qisās*.⁹

The law of *qisās* which is mentioned in the various verses of the Qur’ān is based on the following four clauses:

Firstly, *qisās* is an obligation imposed by the Almighty on an Islamic State. It guarantees survival to a society and is, in fact, a Divine Law which can only be breached by those who wrong their souls. Consequently, it is the responsibility of the government to search for the murderer, arrest him and implement the will of the heirs of the murdered person.

Secondly, complete equality should be observed in taking *qisās*. Hence, if the murderer is a slave, only that particular slave should be executed and if the murderer is a free man, only that particular free man should be executed. A person’s social status should never create an exception to this rule of equality nor should it be given any emphasis in this regard.

Thirdly, the heirs of the slain or wounded person have only two options: they can either demand life for life, limb for limb wound for wound or they can forgive the criminal and accept *diyat* from him. The latter case, according to the

9. Ibid., vol. 2, 503.

Qur’ān is a favour and rebate by the Almighty to the criminal. Consequently, if the heirs of the slain person accept the forgiveness of the slayer, then this shall become an atonement (*kaffārah*) for their sins before the Almighty.

Fourthly, if the wounded person or the heirs of the slain person agree to accept *diyat*, then this should be given to them with kindness and goodwill. In the words of Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī:

... the directive of paying *diyat* with kindness has been given because in that period in Arabia *diyat* was generally not given in the form of cash; it was paid in kind or in the form of animals. Therefore, if the payers of *diyat* had any ill-intention in their hearts, they could defraud the receiving party. It is easily possible in case of camels and goats or dates and other grains to pay *diyat* as far as the agreed quantity and weight is concerned, disregarding their quality and nature. This would amount to ignoring the favour done by the aggrieved party by forgiving the murderer. Someone whose life had been left at the mercy of a person by the *sharī‘ah* had been forgiven by him and he had agreed to accept some wealth instead. This favour should be answered by a favour only, ie. the payment of *diyat* should be done with such magnanimity and munificence that the heirs of the slain person should not feel that by accepting camels and goats in place of the life of a beloved they had committed a mistake or done something dishonourable.¹⁰

The importance given to the slain person’s heirs in this law while deciding for any lenience for the criminal is based on great wisdom. It not only appeases their spirit of revenge, but also goes a long way in ridding the society of such crimes. Writes thus Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī:

... leaving the life of the killer directly at the mercy of the heirs of the murdered person compensates to some extent the tremendous loss caused. Furthermore, if the heirs of the slain person adopt a soft attitude at that moment, they do a big favour to the murderer and his family, which can be hoped to produce many useful results.¹¹

However, this does not at all mean that if at some place a formal government does not exist and the matter of *qisās* is solely left to the discretion of the heirs of the accused, then they, in their capacity as heirs, should exceed the limits and, for example, slay others besides the slayer in frenzy of revenge or out of prejudice for their status and superiority demand the execution of a free person in place of a slave or a man in place of a woman, or kill the criminal by torturing him, or take out their venom on his dead body or adopt those methods of killing which have been prohibited by the Almighty like burning someone in fire or mutilating his corpse or in cases of injury, when there is a strong chance that *qisās* would

10. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 1, 434.

11. Ibid., vol. 1, 433.

inflict more harm on the inflicter than the harm he himself had caused, they still insist upon limb in place of limb and wound in place of wound. Consequently, when the Prophet (sws) was in Makkah and his rule was yet to be established in Madīnah, the Almighty said:

وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلومًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لِوَالِيِّهِ سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يُسْرِفْ فِي الْقُتْلِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مَنْصُورًا (١٧: ٣٣)

And whoever is killed wrongfully, We have given his heir an authority. So he should not exceed the bounds in taking a life, for he has been helped. (17:33)

The basic objective of this law, as is mentioned by the Qur'ān, is to protect life. Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī explains this in the following way:

... this life does not relate to the individual; it relates to the society. If a murderer is executed because of his crime, it apparently seems as if a second life has been taken, but a little deliberation shows that this punishment actually guarantees the life of the whole society. If this punishment is not carried out, the mental disorder in which a person commits this crime is actually transmitted to the society. The extent of various diseases differs: diseases which result in such heinous crimes as murder, robbery, theft or fornication are like those diseases in which it is necessary to amputate some limb of the body to save the whole body. Amputating a limb may seem a callous act, yet a doctor has to be callous. If by showing sympathy to this limb he does not force himself to this cruelty, he may have to bear with the patient's death.

A society in its collective capacity is like a body. At times, its limbs get infected to the extent that the only option is to cut them off from the body through an operation. If sympathy is shown by considering it to be the limb of a patient, there is all the chance that this would fatally affect the whole body.¹²

ii. Unintentional

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ أَنْ يَقْتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا إِلَّا خَطًّا وَمَنْ قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا خَطًّا فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ وَدِيَةٌ مُسَلَّمَةٌ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَصَدِّقُوا فَإِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَدُوًّا لَكُمْ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ وَإِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ يَبْيَنُّكُمْ وَيَبْيَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ فَدِيَةٌ مُسَلَّمَةٌ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ وَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصَيْامٌ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ تَوْبَةً مِنَ اللَّهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْمًا حَكِيمًا (٩٢: ٤)

And it is unlawful for a believer to kill a believer except if it happens by accident. And he who kills a believer accidentally must free one Muslim slave and pay *diyat* to the heirs of the victim except if they forgive him. If the victim is a Muslim belonging to a people at enmity with you, the freeing of a

12. Ibid., vol. 1, 436.

Muslim slave is enough. But if the victim belongs to an ally, *diyat* shall be given to his heirs and a Muslim slave shall also have to be set free. He who does not have a slave, must fast two consecutive months. This is from Allah a way to repent from this sin: and He is Wise, All-Knowing. (4:92)

This law is based on three clauses:

Firstly, if the murdered person is a Muslim citizen of a Muslim State or if he is not a Muslim but belongs to a nation with which a treaty has been concluded, it is necessary for the murderer who has not been forgiven to pay *diyat* to atone for his sin and repent before the Almighty and free a Muslim slave as well.

Secondly, if the murdered person is a Muslim and belongs to an enemy country, the murderer is not required to pay *diyat*; in this case, it is enough that he only free a Muslim slave.

Thirdly, in both these cases, if the criminal does not have a slave, he should consecutively fast for two months.

These are the directives as far as unintentional murder¹³ is concerned. But it is obvious that the directive of unintentionally injuring someone should also be no different. Hence, in this case also *diyat* shall have to be paid and fasts shall have to be kept considering the amount of *diyat* paid. For example, if the *diyat* of a certain type of wound is fixed at one-third of the *diyat* of murder, twenty fasts as atonement shall also have to be kept.

An important issue in these directives of intentional and unintentional murder is the amount of *diyat* to be given and its methodology. In verse 92 of Sūrah Nisā’ quoted above, the words دِيَةُ مُسْلِمٍ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ are used. The word *diyat* in these verses occurs as a common noun, about which we all know that its meaning is determined by its linguistic and customary usage, and by the context in which it is used. Nothing other than these are required. Therefore, in this verse *diyat* means something which in the general custom and usage is called “*diyat*”. And the words دِيَةُ مُسْلِمٍ إِلَى أَهْلِهِ simply mean that the family of the murdered person should be given what the general custom and linguistic usage term as “*diyat*”. In verse 178 of Sūrah Baqarah, where the directive of *diyat* in case of intentional murder has been given, the word مَعْرُوف (ma’rūf: custom) is used to qualify it:

13. Consequently, without a person’s fault, this law shall not relate to such a case. The Prophet (sws), according to this principle, said:

الْعَجَمَاءُ جُبَارٌ وَالْبَشَرُ جُبَارٌ وَالْمَعْنَدُونَ جُبَارٌ

If an animal kills a person, it is not the responsibility of the animal’s owner; if a person falls in a well, the owner of the well is not responsible and if an accident occurs in a mine, the owner of the mine cannot be held responsible. (Al-Bukhārī, Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh, 244, (no. 1499))

In other words, in such cases the owner is not to be blamed if his fault has not caused the mishap.

فَمَنْ عُغِيَ لَهُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ شَيْءٌ فَأَتَبْعِثُ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَأَدَاءً إِلَيْهِ بِإِحْسَانٍ (٢:١٧٨)

Then for whom there has been some remission from his brother, [the remission] should be followed according to the *ma'rūf* and *diyat* should be paid with kindness. (2:178)

It is evident from the above mentioned verses of Sūrah Nisā' and Sūrah Baqarah that in case of intentional as well as un-intentional murder, the Qur'ān wants *diyat* to be paid according to the customs and traditions of the society. It has not prescribed any specific amount for *diyat* nor has it directed the Muslims to discriminate in this matter between a man or a woman, a slave or a free man and a Muslim or a non-Muslim.¹⁴ The Prophet (sws) decided all the cases of *diyat* according to the customs and traditions of the Arabian society during their own times. The quantities of *diyat* which have been mentioned in our books of Ḥadīth and *fiqh* are in accordance with this custom and tradition, which itself has its roots in the social conditions and cultural traditions of the Arabs. However, since then, the wheel of fortune has revolved through fourteen more centuries and the tide of time has sped past innumerable crests and falls. Social conditions and cultural traditions have undergone a drastic change. In present times, it is not possible to pay *diyat* in the form of camels nor is it a very wise step to fix the amount of *diyat* on this basis. The nature of عاقلة (community/tribe) has completely changed and various forms of unintentional murder have come into existence which could never have been imagined before. We know that the guidance provided by the Qur'ān is for all times and for every society. Hence, in this regard, it has directed us to follow the مَعْرُوف (ma'rūf: custom) which may change with time. By this Qur'ānic directive, every society is to obey its customs, and since in our own society no law about *diyat* exists previously, those at the helm of our state can either continue with the above mentioned Arab custom or re-legislate in this regard; whatever they do, if the society accepts the legislation, it will assume the status of our *ma'rūf*. Also, it is obvious that those in authority in any society can revise and re-structure the laws which are based on the *ma'rūf*, keeping in view the collective good of the masses.

3. Fornication

الرَّانِيُّ وَالرَّانِيُّ فَاجْلِدُوَا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمَا مائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ وَلَا تَأْخُذُ كُمْ بِهِمَا رُفَافٌ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يَشَهِدُ عَذَابَهُمَا طَافِقٌ مِنْ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الرَّانِيُّ لَا يَنْكِحُ إِلَّا زَانِيَةً أَوْ مُشْرِكَةً وَالرَّانِيَّةُ لَا يَنْكِحُهَا إِلَّا زَانَ أَوْ مُشْرِكٌ وَحُرِمَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٢٤: ٢-٣)

The man and the woman guilty of fornication, flog each of them with a

14. For a detailed discussion by the author on the meaning and nature of *diyat*, see: Javed Ahmad Ghāmidī, *Burhān*, 6th ed. (Lahore: Al-Mawrid, 2009), 9-24. (Translator).

hundred stripes and let not compassion move you in their case in the enforcement of the law of God, if you truly believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a party of the believers witness their punishment. The man guilty of fornication may only marry a woman similarly guilty or an idolatress and the woman guilty of fornication may only marry such a man or an idolater. The believers are forbidden such marriages. (24:2-3)

The initial directive of the Qur’ān regarding the punishment of fornication¹⁵ is mentioned in Sūrah Nisā’. No definite punishment is mentioned there; it is only said that that until some directive is revealed about women who as prostitutes habitually commit fornication, they should be confined to their homes, and the common perpetrators of this crime should be chastised until they repent and mend their ways. This chastisement may range from exhorting and reprimanding, scolding and censuring, humiliating and disgracing the criminal to beating him up for the purpose of reforming him.

وَاللَّاتِي يَأْتِينَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمْ فَاسْتَشْهِدُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةً مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ شَهَدُوا فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ فِي الْبُيُوتِ حَتَّىٰ يَتَوَفَّاهُنَّ الْمَوْتُ أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ أَهْنَ سَبِيلًا وَاللَّذَانِ يَأْتِيَانِهَا مِنْكُمْ فَادْعُوهُمَا فَإِنْ تَابَا وَأَصْلَحَا فَأَعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيمًا (٤: ١٥-١٦)

And upon those of your women who commit fornication, call in four people among yourselves to testify over them; if they testify [to their ill-ways], confine them to their homes till death overtakes them or God formulates another way for them. And the man and woman among you who commit fornication, chastise them. If they repent and mend their ways, leave them alone. For God is Ever-Forgiving and Most Merciful. (4:15-16)

This was the punishment of fornication in the *sharī‘ah* before a definite directive was revealed in Sūrah Nūr. Once this was revealed, it repealed the previous directive permanently.

The directives mentioned in these verses can be explained thus:

1. The man or woman who have committed fornication, both shall receive a hundred stripes. According to the methodology adopted by the Prophet (sws) and the Rightly Guided Caliphs and according to case precedents reported in our books of Hadīth and *fiqh* in this regard:

i) Whether a cane is used to flog a criminal or a lash, in both cases it should neither be very thick and hard nor very thin and soft.¹⁶

ii) The criminal should not be beaten bare-bodied or while tied to a tripod.¹⁷

15. Here it may be noted that the term “fornication” has been used to connote the crime regardless of the fact that its perpetrators are married or not. (Translator)

16. Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 3, 262-263; Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn al-‘Arabī, *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, 3rd ed., vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-ma‘ārifah, 1972), 1327.

17. Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 3, 261-262.

iii) The criminal should not be flogged in a manner that wounds him nor should he be flogged on one part of the body: the flogging should be made to spread all over the body except for his face and private parts.¹⁸

iv) A pregnant woman should be flogged only after she has given birth and the period of puerperal discharge has passed.¹⁹

2. The criminal should be given this punishment publicly to humiliate him in front of the people, and to make him a lesson for those present. The verse directs the government or the court of justice to not show any lenience in this regard. This harsh treatment given to the criminal is necessary because the stability of a society relies on the sanctity of the relationships in a family and on their protection from every type of disorder. Fornication, a little deliberation shows, makes a society unstable and turns it into a herd of animals. It, therefore, deprives a society of its well-being and prosperity. Hence, such criminals should be dealt with without showing them any compassion. The words used by the Qur’ān are: وَلَا تَأْخُذُ كُنْ بِهِمَا رَأْفَةً فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ (and let not compassion move you in their case in the enforcement of the law of God).

Writes Imām Amīn Ahsan Islāhī in his celebrated commentary of the Qur’ān:

... ie. no lenience should be shown in the implementation of this punishment; softness should be shown to neither a woman nor a man, to neither the rich nor the poor. The limits set by Allah should be observed without granting any alleviation or showing partiality, for this is a requirement of belief in Allah and in the Hereafter. The faith in Allah and in the Hereafter of those who show weakness in this regard cannot be trusted. A noteworthy point in the statement of this punishment is that the woman is mentioned before the man. One reason for this is that without a woman’s consent fornication cannot take place; secondly, there is a strong possibility that being the weaker sex, feelings of compassion may arise for her; the Qur’ān, therefore, has mentioned her before the man so that it becomes evident from the style of the verse that in the Almighty’s eyes no lenience should be shown to either the woman or the man.²⁰

It is with these sentiments of impartiality in the observance of the limits of Allah that the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

وَإِنْ اللَّهُ لَوْ أَنْ فَاطِمَةَ بْنَتَ مُحَمَّدٍ سَرَقَتْ لَقَطَعْتُ يَدَهَا

By God! If Fātimah the daughter of Muhammad had committed this theft, I would definitely have cut off her hand.²¹

18. Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 3, 260; Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 3, 1327; Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 4, 166, (no. 4493); Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 2, 483, (no. 7279).

19. Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, vol. 1, 406.

20. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 5, 362.

21. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 728, (no. 4304).

3. After this punishment has been carried out, no chaste man or woman should marry men and women who commit fornication. According to the Qur'ān, such people can only marry among their own sort or among the idolaters. It does not allow the marriage of a pious woman with a man guilty of committing fornication nor does it permit a pious man to bring home such a woman in his house. Consequently, every such marriage is not considered legal in Islam. The words لَا يَنْكِحْ (he should not marry) denote prohibition of such marriages, and to explain this very aspect, the Almighty says: وَ حُرِّمَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (the believers are forbidden such marriages).

However, as stated earlier, this directive pertains only to the fornicators (both male and female) who have become liable to punishment once their crime has been proven. This is what grammatical rules dictate; ie. the words الْرَّانِي لَا يَنْكِحْ (the male fornicator should not marry) and الْرَّانِة لَا يَنْكِحُهَا (the female fornicator should not be married) of the third verse refer to الْرَّانِيَةُ وَ الْرَّانِي (the female fornicator and the male fornicator) mentioned in the previous one.

4. While stating this punishment, adjectives are used to qualify the men and women who commit fornication. This is similar to the statement in which the punishment for theft is mentioned. It is evident therefore that this punishment is the utmost punishment, which should be given only when the crime has been committed in its ultimate form and the criminal does not deserve any lenience as far as the circumstances of the crime are concerned. Consequently, criminals who are foolish, insane, have been compelled by circumstances, are without the necessary protection required to abstain from committing a crime, or cannot bear the punishment are all exempt from this punishment.

About those women whom their masters force to take to prostitution, the Qur'ān says:

وَمَنْ يُكْرِهُنَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِكْرَاهِهِنَّ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٢٤:٣٣)

And if anyone compels them, Allah will be Forgiving and Merciful to them after their being compelled to it. (24:33)

Similarly, about the slave women who were present in the Prophet's times, it says that they also cannot be administered this punishment because of improper upbringing and education and because of lack of family protection – so much so that if their husbands and masters have done all they can to keep them chaste and in spite of this they commit the crime, they shall be given only half this punishment ie. fifty stripes instead of hundred. The Qur'ān says:

فَإِذَا أَحْسِنَ فَإِنْ أَتَيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ فَعَلَيْهِنَّ نِصْفُ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْسِنَاتِ مِنْ الْعَدَابِ (٤:٢٥)

Then when they are kept chaste [in this manner] and they commit fornication, their punishment is half that of free women. (4:25)

4. Qadhf

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ ثَمَانِينَ حَلْدَةً وَلَا تَقْبِلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَدًا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ تَأْتُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ أَزْوَاحَهُمْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُمْ شُهَدَاءٍ إِلَّا أَنفُسُهُمْ فَشَهَادَةُ أَحَدِهِمْ أَرْبَعُ شَهَادَاتٍ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَمْ يَرْمُمْ الصَّادِقِينَ وَالْخَامِسَةُ أَنَّ لِعَنةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ وَيَدْرُأُ عَنْهَا الْعَذَابَ أَنْ تَشَهَّدَ أَرْبَعُ شَهَادَاتٍ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَمْ يَرْمُمْ الْكَاذِبِينَ وَالْخَامِسَةُ أَنَّ غَضَبَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (٢٤: ٩-٤)

And those who accuse chaste women and bring not four witnesses as an evidence [for their accusation], inflict eighty stripes upon them, and never accept their testimony in future. They indeed are transgressors. But those who repent and mend their ways, Allah is Ever-Forgiving and Most-Merciful. And those who accuse their wives but have no witnesses except themselves shall swear four times by Allah that they are telling the truth and the fifth time that the curse of Allah be on them if they are lying. But this shall avert the punishment from the wife if she swears four times by Allah and says that this person is a liar and the fifth time she says that the curse of Allah be on her if he is telling the truth. (24:4-9)

This is the directive for *qadhf*, ie accusing someone of fornication. Although, in these verses, only the accusation of women is mentioned, yet in the Arabic language this style which can be termed as *علی سَبِيل التَّغْلِيب* (*alā sabīl al-taghlīb*: addressing the dominant element) is adopted because normally in a society only women become targets of such allegations, and the society is also sensitive about them. Consequently, there is no doubt that on the grounds of “similarity of basis” this directive pertains to both men and women and cannot be restricted to women only.

In the above quoted verses, two forms of *qadhf* are stated:

Firstly, a person accuses a chaste and righteous woman or man of fornication.

Secondly, such an accusation takes place between a husband and wife.

In the first case, the law of Islam is that the accuser shall have to produce four witnesses. Anything less than this will not prove his accusation. Mere circumstantial evidence or mere medical examination in this case are absolutely of no importance. If a person is of lewd and loose character, such things have a very important role, but if he has a morally sound reputation, Islam wants that even if he has faltered, his crime should be concealed and he should not be disgraced in the society. Consequently, in this case, it wants four eye-witnesses for the testimony to initiate the hearing, and if the accuser fails to produce them, it regards him as guilty of *qadhf*.

According to the Qur’ān, the details of the punishment of *qadhf* are:

1. The criminal shall be administered eighty stripes.
2. His testimony shall never be accepted in future in any matter, and as such he

shall stand defamed in the society.

Administering eighty stripes and not considering a person eligible to bear witness are punishments of the Herein, while in the Hereafter he shall be counted among the transgressors except if he repents and mends his ways.

In the second case, ie. if such an instance takes place between a husband and his wife, then according to the Qur’ān, if no evidence is available, the matter shall be decided by pledging oaths. In Islamic law, this case is termed as لَعْان (li’ān). The husband shall swear four times by Allah that he is truthful in his accusation and the fifth time he shall swear that the curse of Allah be on him if he is lying. In reply, if the wife does not defend herself in anyway, she shall be punished for fornication.²² If she refutes the allegations, she shall only be acquitted from the punishment if she swears four times by Allah that the person is lying and the fifth time she says that the wrath of Allah be on her if he is telling the truth.

The same procedure shall be adopted if the wife accuses the husband.

5. Theft

وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطُعُوا أَيْدِيهِمَا حَزَاءً بِمَا كَسَبُوكُلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ فَمَنْ تَابَ مِنْ
بَعْدِ ظُلْمِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٣٩-٣٨: ٥)

And as to the thief, male or female, cut off their hands as a reward of their own deeds, and as an exemplary punishment from God. For God is Mighty and Wise. But whoever repents and mends his ways after committing this crime shall be pardoned by Allah. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. (5:38-39)

The law which has been stated in the above mentioned verses is based on the following clauses:

1. The punishment of amputating the hands is prescribed for a thief, both male (*sāriq*) and female (*sāriqah*). According to linguistic principles, the words *sāriq* and *sāriqah* are adjectives and denote thoroughness and completeness in the characteristics of the verb they qualify. Consequently, they can only be used for the type of *sarqah* which can be called a theft and the one who commits it is called a thief. In other words, if a child steals a few rupees from his father’s pocket, or a wife pinches some money from her husband’s purse, or if a person steals something very ordinary, or plucks some fruit from his neighbour’s orchard, or carries away something valuable which has been left unprotected, or drives away

22. This refers to a hundred stripes. The Qur’ānic words used are يَنْزِلُ عَنْهَا الْعَذَابَ. To convey the same meaning, the word used is عَذَابَهُمَا in verse two of Sūrah Nūr just prior to these verses. According to grammatical principles, whenever a noun has been defined by *alif-lām* and is repeated later, then if something within the context does not pose a hindrance, the repeated noun shall have the same meaning as the first. Consequently, here, no other punishment than a hundred stripes can be regarded as implied.

an unattended grazing animal, or commits this ignoble offence owing to some need or compulsion, then, no doubt all these are unworthy acts and should be punished, but, certainly, they cannot be classified as acts of theft which the above given verse qualifies. This shows that the amputation of hands is the utmost punishment and should only be administered when the criminal does not deserve any lenience as far as the nature and circumstances of his crime are concerned.

2. This punishment, according to the Qur’ān is حَرَاءٌ بِمَا كَسَبَ نَكَالٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ. Hence in order to make the criminal an example in the eyes of others just as the affinity between the crime and nature of its punishment requires that his hand be cut, it also requires that his right hand be cut because it is this hand which is actually the instrument of doing things. It is also evident that the word “hand” on account of definite linguistic denotation means that part of the arm which is below the wrist.

3. The objective of this punishment is stated in the words حَرَاءٌ بِمَا كَسَبَ نَكَالٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ (as a reward of their deeds and as an exemplary punishment). Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī explains this in the following way:

... [in this verse], two reasons are stated for the amputation of hands: firstly, it is the punishment of the crime, and secondly, the punishment has to be given in an exemplary way which is a means of a severe warning to others. The Qur’ān uses the word نَكَال (nakāl) for such a punishment. Since both these reasons are stated adjacently without any conjunction between them, they must be regarded as essentials in carrying out the punishment ie. a means of retribution of the crime and as a means of a severe warning for the society. Those who do not simultaneously take into consideration both these aspects often end up thinking that the punishment is severer than the crime itself. The actual fact is that this punishment is not only the retribution of the criminal act, but it is also a means to putting an end to many such crimes which may be triggered as a result if the criminals are not totally discouraged by treating them harshly. Like the craving for sex, the lust for wealth is also intense in a person. If this lust is allowed to thrive and prosper, the consequences which arise may well be observed in our own society by any keen eye. If a list of crimes committed in the most civilized of countries in one year only because of theft is prepared, it will be enough to open the eyes. The faint hearts of these civilized societies are deeply moved if hands are amputated because of theft, yet the horrendous crimes which result directly or indirectly through theft fail to rouse any feelings of concern in them. Theft is not a simple crime: it is a source of many crimes. If this crime is eliminated, these crimes shall automatically be taken care of. Consequently, it is a matter of experience that the amputation of hands on account of theft has not only reduced instances of this crime, but has also gone a long way in reducing other crimes as well. If by amputating a few hands, the life, wealth and honour of thousands of people are safeguarded, then this is not a bad deal at all; in fact, it is a very lucrative one. Regrettably the intelligentsia of this modern age fails to appreciate this.²³

23. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur’ān*, vol. 2, 512.

4. This is merely a punishment in this world. As far as the Hereafter is concerned, a person can only attain salvation if he repents and mends his ways. Repentance and the punishment of this world are not mutually exchangeable. Consequently, this punishment shall be administered even if a person repents and reforms himself, and after receiving this punishment in this world, he shall only be forgiven in the Hereafter if he repents and reforms himself.

The Dietary Sharī‘ah

قُلْ لَا أَحَدٌ فِي مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلَى طَاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمًا حِتَزِيرٍ فِإِنَّهُ رِحْسٌ أَوْ فِسْقًا أَهْلٌ لِعَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (١٤٥:٦)

Say: “I find not in what has been revealed to me through inspiration forbidden to a person who eats things which are edible, unless it be meat of dead animals, or blood poured forth or the flesh of swine because all these are unclean or in, disobedience to Allah, animals slaughtered in someone else’s name.” Then he who is constrained by hunger such that he neither desires to eat nor crosses the limits [incurs no sin]. This is because your Lord is forgiving and merciful. (6:145)

The objective of Islam is to purify all aspects of human life. It therefore insists that besides cleansing the inner-self from contamination, care must be exercised in the intake of food and drinks. Only the ritually clean among them should be eaten and drunk. While answering a question in the Qur’ān regarding animals tamed for hunting, the Almighty has spelled out this general principle in the words: أَحَلَ لَكُمُ الطَّيَّابَاتِ (٤ : ٥) (all clean things are lawful to you, (5:4)). As an obvious corollary, all unclean things are forbidden to the believers. While inviting the Jews and Christians to profess faith in Muhammad (sws), the Almighty has referred to the extremist attitude they had adopted with regard to food and drinks in the following words:

وَيُحَلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيَّابَاتِ وَيُنَهَا عَنْهُمُ الْخَبَاثَ وَيَضْعُفُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرُهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالُ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ (٧:١٥٧)

And [this Prophet] allows them as lawful what is appropriate for eating and prohibits them from what is inappropriate for eating; he releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that were upon them. (7:157)

At no place has the *sharī‘ah* presented a comprehensive list of clean edibles. The reason for this is that man’s own nature generally provides him with ample guidance in this matter and, without any hesitation, he is able to decide the right

course. He very well knows that lions, tigers, elephants, eagles, crows, vultures, kites, scorpions and human flesh itself are not meant to be eaten. He is also well aware of the fact that horses and mules are a means of transportation and have no role in satisfying one's hunger. That faeces and urine of animals are impure things is known to him very well also. His reason and intellect guide him very well regarding intoxicants too. Consequently, in this matter, the innate guidance found in human nature is enough to lead the way. The prohibition attributed to the Prophet (sws) regarding beasts having sharp canine teeth, birds having claws and tentacles in their feet,¹ *jallālah*² and tamed donkeys³ is merely a delineation of this innate guidance. The prohibition of liquor is another directive which is based on innate guidance. During the time when the Qur'ān was being revealed, when people repeatedly asked about certain benefits that it had in that time, the Almighty revealed in the Qur'ān His answer by saying that the sin it incurs is much greater than its benefits (2:219). Later in Sūrah Mā'idah, it was explicitly stated that liquor is from among the filthy works of Satan and a believer should totally abstain from it:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ
لَعْلَكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ (٩٠:٥)

Believers! This liquor and gambling and stone altars and these divining arrows are abominations devised by Satan. Avoid them that you may succeed. (5:90)

In short, all these prohibitions are found in the innate guidance a person possesses ever since his birth. No doubt, at times, human nature becomes perverted but a study of human behaviour shows that generally people do not falter in this matter. It is for this reason that the *sharī‘ah* has not given any original guidance on this matter. In this regard, the *sharī‘ah* has provided guidance on animals and on things related to these animals where human beings were liable to falter. The pig is a quadruped beast of the same genre as the goat, sheep, cow and cattle; however, it consumes meat like other carnivores. Should it then be considered forbidden or not? Should animals which are slaughtered in a way that all their blood is not drained out be eaten or not? Is the blood of animals impure as indeed are their faeces and urine? If animals are slaughtered by taking the name of someone other than the Almighty, can they still be eaten? Since human nature is unable to come up with a decisive answer in this regard, therefore the Almighty guided mankind in this affair through His prophets and informed them that the flesh of the pig, blood, meat of dead animals and animals

1. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 864, (no. 4994).

2. Al-Nasā'i, *Sunan*, 617, (no. 4452). This name is given to animals whose meat carries a stink in it because they feed on filth.

3. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 716. (no. 4216); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 591, (no. 3431).

which are slaughtered in the name of someone other than Allah are also impure and unclean and therefore people should abstain from them. In this regard, these aforementioned four things have been primarily discussed by the *sharī'ah*. The Qur'ān at various places by employing various linguistic expressions,⁴ has unequivocally stated that only and only these four things are prohibited by the Almighty.

This directive stated in Sūrah An'ām quoted in the beginning is also mentioned in 2:173-4 and 16:115 with a slight difference in words. Then in Sūrah Mā'idah certain aspects of the directive have been explained.

The first thing in this explanation concerns ميته (*maytah*: the dead). In this regard, a question could have arisen in the minds of some people: Should an animal which died some sort of an accidental death also be classified as *maytah* just like an animal which dies a natural death is classified so? The Qur'ān answered this question by saying that there is no difference between the two: both are forms of *maytah*. Similarly, the Qur'ān clarified that an animal killed by a wild beast is also *maytah*, except if it is found alive and then slaughtered in the ceremonial way (*dhibh*).

The Qur'ān says:

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِتَرِ وَمَا أُهْلِكَ لِعَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَالْمُرْتَدَةُ
وَالظَّبِيحَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَيْتُمْ (٣:٥)

Forbidden to you [for food] are: meat of dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that on which Allah's Name has not been invoked while slaughtering, and that which has been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by the goring of horns – and that which has been eaten by a wild animal – unless you are able to slaughter it [before its death]. (5:3)

It needs to be kept in mind that like other words, the word *maytah* is used in the above mentioned directives according to its usage in the Arabic language. No doubt, it has a literal meaning; however, its usage in the Arabic language does not include all the dead, as is the case with its Urdu usage. In such a case, it becomes confined to a certain specific meaning, and anyone who is aware of this intricacy, for example, will never include dead fish or dead locust in its connotation:

Imām al-Zamakhsharī writes:

قصد ما يتفاهمه الناس و يتعارفونه في العادة ، لا ترى أن القائل إذا قال : أكل فلان ميته ، لم يسبق الوهم إلى السمك والجراد كما لو قال : أكل دما ، لم يسبق إلى الكبد والطحال ، ولا اعتبار العادة والتعارف قالوا : من حلف لا يأكل لحماً فأكل سمكا لم يحنث وإن أكل لحماً في الحقيقة

4. They are قُلْ لَا أَجِدُ فِي مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ (say: I do not find anything [forbidden] in what [God] has revealed to me), and أَنَّمَا (only and only).

The word ميته (maytah) mentioned in the Qur'ān must be understood according to its linguistic usage. Is not the case that when someone says that he has eaten maytah, we never include a fish or a locust in its connotation. This is similar to the fact that if a person says that he has drunk blood, we never include liver or spleen in its connotation. Precisely because of such usage, jurists say that if a person swears that he will never eat meat and then he consumes fish, this will not break his oath although in reality he has eaten meat.⁵

Owing to similar reasons, about sea water, the Prophet (sws) is ascribed to have said:

هُوَ الظَّفُورُ مَا فِيهِ الْحَلُّ مِيتٌ

Its water is pure and its *maytah* is not forbidden.⁶

In other words, the above quoted words of the Prophet (sws) also pertain to dead fish and certain other similar things which cannot be regarded as *maytah* as far as the usage of the word is concerned but which are *maytah* in the literal sense of the word.

It is evident from 5:3 (quoted above) that the explanation of the word *maytah* and the words إِلَى مَا ذَكَرْتُمْ (except if you slaughter it in the prescribed way) after أَكَلَ السَّبَعَ (what has been eaten by a wild animal) that the only form of death that does not make an animal *maytah* is *tadhiyah*. *Tadhiyah* is a *sunnah* established by the Prophets of Allah and as a term means to slaughter an animal in such way that it drains out all the blood in the animal's body and the animal dies because of this very reason. It is only this method of killing an animal which cleanses its meat from the impurity of blood.

The correct methodology for *tadhiyah* is ذبح (dhibh) or نحر (nahr). *Dhibh* specifically concerns the cow, goat and similar animals, while *nahr* specifically relates to the camel and animals similar to it. *Dhibh* means to cut the throat of an animal such that the gullet and the throat is slit open or to cut the throat and the jugular veins. *Nahr* means to pierce the throat of the animal with a sharp edged weapon like a spear so that blood bursts out from the wound and the animal dies because of blood loss.

If it is not possible to adopt the above outlined prescribed methods of slaughter, then the Prophet (sws) has directed the believers to use any other thing to inflict a cut on the animal such that all the blood is able to drain away from that wound:

عَنْ عَدِيِّ بْنِ حَاتِمٍ قَالَ قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ أَحَدُنَا أَصَابَ صَيْدًا وَأَيْسَ مَعْهُ سَكِينٌ أَيْذَبَحُ بِالْمَرْوِةِ وَشِقَةِ الْعَصَابَ فَقَالَ: أَمْرِرْ الدَّمَ بِمَا شِئْتَ وَادْكُرْ اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ.

5. Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 1, 215.

6. Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 7, (no. 59).

'Adī ibn Hātim says: "O Messenger of Allāh! Is it okay to slaughter a prey with a stone or a piece of wood if the prey is at hand and we do not have a knife to slaughter it?" He replied: "Drain out the blood with whatever you have and take the name of Allah on it."⁷

Killing a prey with a gun or an arrow would also be conditional to what has been said above. If a tamed animal cuts open a prey, its case is also similar, as explained by the Almighty in the Qur'ān. If such an animal is not found alive, then also it should not be considered as *maytah*:⁸

يَسْأَلُوكُمْ مَاذَا أُحِلَّ لَهُمْ قُلْ أُحِلَّ لِكُمُ الظَّبَابُ وَمَا عَلِمْتُمْ مِنِ الْجَوَارِحِ مُكَلِّبِينَ تَعْلَمُونَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلِمْتُمُ اللَّهُ فَكَلُوا مِمَّا أَمْسَكْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَادْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

(٤٠)

They ask what is lawful to you: "Say all good things are lawful to you as well as [the prey of] the beasts you have taught, training them as Allah has taught you. So eat of what they catch for you and [before you let lose the beast to catch the prey], pronounce upon it⁹ the name of Allah. And have fear of Allah. Swift is He in taking account." (5:4)

It is evident from the context of the above verse that since the verse preceding it states that an animal that has been cut open by a beast is only allowed to be eaten if it is found alive and then slaughtered in the prescribed way, it was but natural that the question should arise: Is such an animal allowed to be eaten as has been pounced upon by a tamed beast of prey and the animal dies before one gets the chance to slaughter it in the prescribed way? The verse answers the question in the affirmative and says that cutting upon of an animal by a tamed beast of prey is tantamount to *tadhiyah*, and therefore it can be eaten even if it has not been slaughtered in the prescribed way with one condition: the tamed beast of prey has preserved the prey for his master and has not eaten from it. In case it has, then such an animal should not be eaten. This condition is stated in the words مِمَّا أَمْسَكْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ (what they have preserved for you). Moreover, in this regard, there is no need to

7. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 102, (no. 2824).

8. However, if it is not cut open by a tamed animal and the animal dies of fear, then it is a *maytah*. Similarly, if it has not been cut open by a tamed animal and is found alive, then it must be slaughtered in the prescribed way. It is obvious that the requirement of *tadhiyah* is not fulfilled without it.

9. In the opinion of this writer, the antecedent of the pronoun in عَلَيْهِ (on it) is وَمَا عَلِمْتُمْ مِنْ (and [the prey of] the beasts you have taught). The reason for this is that if مِمَّا أَمْسَكْنَ (that which has been caught) is considered to be the antecedent, then this would merely be a repetition of what has already been stated earlier in the words إِلَّا مَا ذَكَرْتُمْ (except if you slaughter it in the prescribed way), and if the antecedent is related to فَكَلُوا (so eat), then it would pertain to the normal etiquette of eating, which of course would be totally out of place here.

discriminate between tamed beasts of prey and tamed birds of prey. Birds like falcons, eagles, and hawks also can be tamed for catching a prey.

The Prophet (sws) is reported to have explained this Qur'ānic purport in the following words:

إِذَا أَرْسَلْتَ كَلْبَكَ فَادْكُرْ اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ فَإِنْ أَدْرَكْتُهُ لَمْ يَقْتُلْ فَادْبِحْ وَإِذْ كُرْ اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنْ أَدْرَكْتُهُ قَدْ قَتَلَ وَلَمْ يَأْكُلْ كُلْ فَقَدْ أَمْسَكَهُ عَلَيْكَ فَإِنْ وَجَدْتُهُ قَدْ أَكَلَ مِنْهُ فَلَا يَطْعَمُ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا فَإِنَّمَا أَمْسَكَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَإِنْ خَالَطَ كَلْبَكَ كَلَابًا فَقَتَلَنَ فَلَمْ يَأْكُلْ فَلَا تَأْكُلْ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا فَإِنَّكَ لَا تَدْرِي أَيُّهَا قَتَلَ.

When you release your dog to catch the prey, take the name of Allah while doing so. If you then see that it has not killed the prey, slaughter it in the prescribed way and take Allah's name while slaughtering it. If it has killed the prey but did not take a bite, then you can eat it since it has preserved it for you. However, if it has eaten from the prey, then such a prey is forbidden for you because the beast of prey has in this case preserved it for itself. And if you see other dogs besides yours who have also killed the prey, then do not eat from it since you do not know which of the dogs has actually killed the prey.¹⁰

Besides the word *maytah*, the other two things mentioned in the verse (6:145) are drained out blood and pork. As far as the prohibition of pork is concerned, it needs no elaboration while in the case of the prohibition of blood, it needs to be kept in mind that the meaning of the words دَمًا مَسْفُوحًا (blood poured forth) have a linguistic usage in the light of which they should be understood. Spleen and liver are nothing but blood, yet usage of the word entails that they not be included in its connotation, as has been pointed out by al-Zamakhsharī quoted earlier. The adjective مَسْفُوحًا (poured forth) which qualifies blood shows that the blood which is left in the blood vessels of the animal is an exception to this directive.

In this list, the fourth and last thing is the meat of an animal while slaughtering which the name of someone other than Allah is invoked. The verse itself explains that the reason for the prohibition of such meat is not the رُحْس (impurity) of the animal but the فُسُقُ (defiance) of the person who slaughters the animal. Since slaughtering an animal while invoking the name of someone other than Allah is an idolatrous practice, it has been termed as فُسُقُ (defiance), which is a form of an impurity pertaining to one's beliefs. Consequently, sense and reason demand that anything which contains such impurity should be analogously included in this prohibition. So on this very principle, the Qur'ān has prohibited certain other similar things:

وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوا بِالْأَزْلَامِ ذَلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ (٣٥)

And what is slaughtered at the stone altars and [forbidden also] is the division

10. Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 594, (no. 4268).

of meat by raffling with arrows. This is [an act of] disobedience. (5:3)

While explaining this verse, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

Nuṣub means the stone altars on which sacrifices and offerings are made. There were several such altars in Arabia where sacrifices were offered to please numerous deities, demons and the jinn. The Qur'ān has also prohibited such a slaughtered animal. It is evident from the words of the Qur'ān that the real reason for their prohibition is merely to please a deity or to seek its nearness – it is of no consequence whether the name of Allah has been invoked or not in such cases. If this prohibition was owing to the fact that the name of someone other than Allah has been invoked during sacrifice, then there was no need to mention it separately since such a prohibition has already been mentioned earlier in وَمَا أَهْلَ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ. In my opinion, also included in the sphere of this prohibition are the various sacrifices offered in tombs and massouleums to earn the pleasure of the departed person buried in the grave or tomb. At the time of slaughter, whether the name of Allah is invoked or that of the person buried in the grave or tomb, the real reason of prohibition is not this invocation but the place at which the slaughter takes place.

The word استقسَام (istiqsām) means to look up one's share or to find out about one's fate and future. The word أَزْلَام (azlām) means arrows of divination or gambling. The practice of seeking divination from arrows was in vogue in Arabia, through which people would try to find out fates ordained for them. Similarly, the practice of gambling on arrows was also in vogue in Arabia through which they would procure pieces of meat or some other thing. I have already pointed out in my commentary on Sūrah Baqarah under verse 219 that people would gather at various places, drink liquor and in their state of inebriation slaughter any camels they could get hold of. They would pay the owner of the camels whatever price he demanded. They would then gamble on the meat of the slaughtered camels. Whatever parts of meat a person won in this gambling, he would cook and eat them and drink liquor; they would also generously distribute them among the poor who would gather around on such occasions. At times, such fights and brawls would emerge in such gatherings as a result of inebriation which would result in inter-tribal battles that would last for years and cause a lot of bloodshed. I think that the words وَأَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوا بِالْأَزْلَامٍ of the verse actually refer to this second category.¹¹

An animal which is slaughtered such that no name other Allah is invoked on it but the name of Allah is also not positively invoked while slaughtering also comes under this fourth category of prohibited items. The Qur'ān has declared it to be an act of *fisq* (defiance; disobedience) just as it has done so in the case of slaughtering an animal in the name of someone other than Allah. While refuting

11. Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 2, 456-457.

certain superstitious beliefs of the Arabs about animals, it says:

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكُرْ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَلَا هُنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ لَيُوحُونَ إِلَيْ أَوْلَائِهِمْ
لِيُخَادِلُوكُمْ وَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُونَ (١٢١:٦)

And eat not that animal on which Allah's name has not been pronounced [at the time of the slaughtering of the animal], for this is a *fisq*. And certainly, the devils do inspire their friends to dispute with you, and [you should know that] if you obey them, then you would indeed be polytheists. (6:121)

While explaining, why not invoking Allah's name on a slaughtered animal or prey make it a prohibited thing Imām Amīn Aḥsan İslāhī, writes:

Firstly, as I have explained in my commentary on the *bismillāh* verse, any task or routine begun without taking the Almighty's name is without the blessings of Allah. One must take the Lord's name whenever benefiting from His favours, whether big or small, to express gratitude at being blessed with them. If he does not show acknowledgement on such favours, then this is tantamount to extortion and making use of something that actually does not belong to him. Such an unbefitting and unworthy attitude deserves the wrath and punishment of the Almighty.

Secondly, the sanctity a life possesses requires that even an animal be sacrificed only with the permission of the Almighty Who is the Creator of life. It is only Allah who can give us this right, and, therefore, as a reminder of this fact, it is necessary to take His name when the life of an animal is taken. If God's name is not taken while slaughtering an animal or, or if someone else's name is invoked, or if besides His name, someone else's name is also taken, then this amounts to violating the sanctity a life has and also showing disrespect to the Almighty Himself.

Thirdly, this practice closes the gateway to polytheism. Those who are aware of the history of various religions know that animal sacrifice, making offerings and making vows on them is deeply linked to worship rituals. Because of its importance, it has received great support and patronage in polytheistic religions. People and nations who have been incriminated with honouring and venerating some deity have got themselves involved in various forms of animal offerings and sacrifices. The Qur'ān records Satan's challenge given to the Almighty in which he openly told Him that he would lead people astray. The challenge specifically mentions this form as a means to procure his objective. To close all these doors to polytheism, the Almighty made it obligatory that His name only should be positively taken while sacrificing an animal. Anyone who does not follow this practice is not only doing something forbidden, but also the animal upon whom he has committed

such an excess is forbidden.¹²

The same prohibition applies for a slaughtered animal or prey on which although the name of Allah is taken but the person who takes this name does not believe in God or subscribes to polytheism by associating other deities with Him. At the time of slaughter, obviously, no distinction can be made between indulging in polytheism by invoking the name of someone other than Allah and the slaughtering of an animal by a polytheist. For this very reason, besides Muslims themselves, the Qur'ān has only allowed animals slaughtered by the People of the Book since they originally subscribe to monotheism. The Qur'ān says:

الْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيْبَاتُ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حِلٌّ لَكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَهُمْ (٥:٥)

All clean things have this day been made lawful to you and the food to whom the Book was given is lawful to you and your to them. (5:5)

This completes the discussion of prohibited items. It is only in compelling circumstances that one is allowed to benefit from them and that too with the conditions that a person neither craves for them nor crosses the bounds by going beyond his essential need. The Qur'ān has used the words عَادَ غَادَ غَيْرَ بَاغَ وَ لَا عَادَ to state these conditions in Sūrah Baqarah and Sūrah Nahl, while in Sūrah Mā'idah the words are slightly different:

فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِنَّمَا اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (٣:٥)

Then he who is constrained by hunger to eat what is forbidden, without showing inclination to sin, will find Allah Forgiving and Merciful. (5:3)

While explaining this, Imām Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī writes:

The word مَخْمَصَةٍ means “hunger”. To be constrained with hunger means that a person reaches the state that he is left with no other option if he is to survive but to eat prohibited items. In these circumstances, he is allowed to benefit from any of the prohibited items in order to save his life. This condition is imposed by the word غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ which at other places is mentioned by the words عَادَ غَادَ غَيْرَ بَاغَ which imply that neither should he eat such items with the fondness of heart, nor should he eat more than what is essentially required. The condition mentioned in the word مَخْمَصَةٍ shows that where other alternatives exist the excuse that halal meat is not available, as is the case in parts of the US and the UK, is not justifiable enough to benefit from prohibited items. Meat is not essential to keep a person alive. Other forms of food can not only keep a person alive but also give him good health and vitality. The condition implied by the words غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ shows that a concession is a concession, and what is prohibited is prohibited in every form. Neither should a prohibited thing

12. Ibid., vol. 3, 157-158.

become a sought after and cherished item nor a concession an eternal permission to benefit from. Consequently, it is stressed that one should only benefit from prohibited edibles just to combat compelling circumstances. If a person takes into consideration these conditions and then benefits from a prohibited item to save his life, the Merciful Lord would indeed forgive him. However, if he takes undue advantage of this permission by having a relishing meal from it, then he should be ready to face its consequences, for this would not be a legitimate excuse on his part when he stands up on the Day of Judgement to give his account to the Almighty.¹³

All these things enlisted above are prohibited as edibles. As far as their other uses are concerned, they are totally allowed. No believer should have any doubt in this regard. Ibn ‘Abbās (rta) says that this is something which the Prophet (sws) himself once pointed out:

قَالَ نُصْدِقَ عَلَىٰ مَوْلَةِ الْمَيْمُونَةَ بِشَاءَ فَمَا تَرِكَ فَمَرَّ بِهَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ هَلْ أَحَدُنُّمْ إِهَابَهَا فَدَبَغْتُمُوهُ فَأَنْتَفَعْتُمْ بِهِ؟ فَقَالُوا إِنَّهَا مَيْتَةٌ، فَقَالَ إِنَّمَا حَرُمَ أَكْلُهَا.

A goat was given in charity to Maymūnah’s maid. The goat died. [It so happened that] the Prophet (sws) passed by. [Seeing the dead goat], he said: “Would that you had taken its hide, tanned it and then made use of it.” People said: “It is a dead animal.” At this, the Prophet declared: “Only eating it is forbidden.”¹⁴

13. Ibid., vol. 2, 458-59.

14. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīḥ*, 156, (no. 806).

Islamic Customs and Etiquette

The various manifestations of the conduct, mannerisms and pattern of living of a group of people are called customs and etiquette. No period of human civilization has remained devoid of them. We find them in currency in every clan, culture and nation. Civilizations are mostly distinguished from one another because of them. The religions revealed to the prophets of Allah also direct their respective believers to follow certain customs and etiquette. The objective of divine religions is purification of the soul. Consequently, these customs and etiquette have been chosen to fulfil this objective. When the Prophet Muhammad (sws) was called to serve the Almighty, all these customs and etiquette existed in Arabia as practices of the Abrahamic religion. Except for a few things, the Prophet Muhammad (sws) made no addition to them. They, obviously, existed before the Qur'ān and their status is that of Sunan (plural of Sunnah) which were sanctioned by the Prophet (sws) and then transferred to the Muslim *ummah* through the consensus and perpetual adherence of the Companions (rta) of the Prophet (sws). Now their source is the consensus of the *ummah* and on this very basis are accepted and acknowledged everywhere as part of Islam. In the following paragraphs, this writer shall elaborate in detail these customs and etiquette prescribed by the prophets of God.

1. Declaring Allah's name before eating and drinking and using the right hand for the purpose

The first of these is to express gratitude to Allah for His bounties and to invoke His blessings and the second is to constantly remind us that those who are bestowed with the favours of Paradise will receive their account in their right hand on the Day of Judgement. In other words, when a true believer uses his right hand while eating and drinking, he symbolically expresses his desire to be among the *ashāb al-yamīn* (companions of the right hand) on the Day of Judgement. The Prophet (sws) has directed us to follow this Sunnah of the prophets in the following words:

سَمْ اللَّهُ وَكُلْ بِيَمِينِكَ

Eat while taking the name of God and use the right hand.¹

1. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 960, (no. 5376).

إِذَا أَكَلَ أَحَدُكُمْ فَلْيَأْكُلْ بِيمِينِهِ وَإِذَا شَرَبَ فَلْيُشْرِبْ بِيمِينِهِ

When anyone among you eats, he should eat with the right hand and when he drinks, he should drink with the right hand.²

2. The ceremonial salutation and its response when people meet one another

The ceremonial salutation is a prayer of peace and well-being for one another in this world and in the Hereafter. The one who initiates the salutation says السَّلَامُ (al-salāmu) and the one who replies says وَ عَلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامُ (wa 'alaykum al-salām). This salutation is mentioned in the Qur'ān as well as in various Ahādīth. While pointing out its correct etiquette, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

يُسَلِّمُ الصَّغِيرُ عَلَى الْكَبِيرِ وَالْمَارُ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِ وَالْقَلِيلُ عَلَى الْكَثِيرِ

The young shall say *salām* to the old, the one who is walking shall say it to the sitting and a small group shall say it to a large one.³

3. The ceremonial utterances after sneezing

Sneezing relieves a person from an internal disorder. A person is required to say الحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ (al-hamdullilāh: all gratitude is for Allah only) after sneezing and anyone who hears him should reply by saying only يَرْحَمُكَ اللَّهُ (yarhamukallāh: may Allah have mercy upon you). These words are meant to remind a believer that the blessings of Allah in this world and in the Hereafter are specifically for people who are grateful. According to some Ahādīth, it was initiated at the dawn of mankind, when the spirit was blown into Adam and he woke up in this world.⁴ The existence of the word تَشْمِيت (tashmīt) for these ceremonial utterances is evidence enough that they are an age old Sunnah which the Prophet Muhammad (sws) sanctioned and adopted for his own *ummah* also. He is reported to have said:

إِذَا عَطَسَ أَحَدُكُمْ فَلْيَقُلْ: الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلْيَقُلْ لَهُ أَخْوُهُ أَوْ صَاحِبُهُ يَرْحَمُكَ اللَّهُ إِذَا قَالَ لَهُ:
يَرْحَمُكَ اللَّهُ فَلْيَقُلْ: يَهْدِيْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيُصْلِحُ بَالَّكُمْ

When anyone of you sneezes, he should say الحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ (al-hamdullilāh)⁵ and if his brother or companion hears these words, he should reply by saying يَرْحَمُكَ اللَّهُ (yarhamukallāh).⁶ And when he says يَرْحَمُكَ اللَّهُ (yarhamukallāh), you should say: "May Allah guide you and keep you well."⁷

2. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 902, (no. 5265).

3. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1085, (no. 6231).

4. Al-Tirmidhī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-kabīr*, vol. 5, 382-383, (no. 3368).

5. Gratitude is for God.

6. May God have mercy on you.

7. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1083, (no. 6224).

4. Clipping the moustache, 5. Shaving the pubes, 6. Removing hair from under the armpits, 7. Paring fingernails, 8. Circumcising the mail offspring

All these five things belong to Islamic etiquette. Large moustaches give the impression of arrogance and conceit in a person. Also edibles and drinks become contaminated through them when they are put in the mouth. Dirt often accumulates in elongated nails and such nails also have resemblance with savage animals. Consequently, the Almighty has directed us to keep our moustaches trim and to pare our fingernails whenever they grow. The rest of the three directives are aimed at one's physical cleanliness and hygiene. So strict was the Prophet (sws) in observing these norms that for some of them he even stipulated a certain time limit. Anas (rta) reports:

وُقْتٌ لَنَا فِي قَصِ الشَّارِبِ وَتَقْلِيمِ الْأَطْفَارِ وَتَنْتَفِ الْإِبَاطِ وَحَلْقِ الْعَانَةِ أَنْ لَا تَنْرُكَ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ أَرْبَعينَ لَيْلَةً.

The time before which we must trim our moustache, pare our fingernails, shave pubic hair, remove hair from under the armpits has been fixed as forty days.⁸

Before the advent of Islam, Arabs usually observed these etiquette.⁹ The source of these norms and practices is found in our own nature and the prophets of Allah have always made them a part of religion, considering the importance they occupy in purifying and cleansing human beings. The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said:

الْفِطْرَةُ خَمْسٌ الْخِتَانُ وَالاسْتِحْدَادُ وَقَصُ الشَّارِبِ وَتَقْلِيمُ الْأَطْفَارِ وَتَنْتَفُ الْأَبَاطِ

Five things are from among [the norms of] human nature: circumcision, shaving the pubes, clipping the moustache, paring fingernails and removing hair under the armpits.¹⁰

9. Cleaning the nostrils, the mouth and the teeth

The fondness towards cleanliness which the prophets of Allah want to inculcate among their followers made them include the above mentioned practices as a Sunnah. In history, they are referred to as شَعَائِر (sha'ā'ir: religious symbols) of Arabia.¹¹ It is known from the way the Prophet (sws) did *wudū* (ablution) that he would specially do مَضْمَضَة (madmadah: to gargle in order to clean the mouth) and اسْتِسْنَاق (istinshāq: to pour water in the nostrils to clean them). He was also very diligent in cleaning his teeth, and is even reported to have said:

8. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 124, (no. 599).

9. Jawwād ‘Alī, *Al-Mufassal fī tārīkh al-‘arab qabl al-islām*, vol. 6, 346.

10. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1036, (no. 5891).

11. Ibid.

لَوْلَا أَنْ أَشْقَى عَلَىٰ أُمَّتِي لَأَمْرَתُهُمْ بِالسُّوَالِكَ مَعَ كُلِّ صَلَاةٍ

Had it not been for the fact that this would burden my *ummah*, I would have directed them to clean their teeth before every prayer.¹²

10. Cleaning the body after urination and defecation

Cleaning carefully the relevant body parts after defecation and urination is another Abrahamic Sunnah.¹³ Depending upon the circumstances, these parts can be cleaned by water, mud cubes or other things that can serve the purpose. It is apparent from various Ahādīth that the Prophet (sws) normally used water for this. Abū Hurayrah (sws) reports:

كَانَ النَّبِيُّ إِذَا أَتَى الْخَلَاءَ أَتَيْتُهُ بِمَاءٍ فِي تَوْرٍ أَوْ رَكْوَةٍ فَاسْتَنْجَحَ ثُمَّ مَسَحَ يَدَهُ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ

When the Prophet would go out to relieve himself, I would bring some water in a utensil or a water-container. He would clean himself from this water and then rub his hands on the mud to clean them.¹⁴

11. Taking the ceremonial bath after the menstrual cycle and the puerperal discharge

The ceremonial bath has also remained a Sunnah of the prophets. As soon as bleeding ceases in both these situations, a woman must have this bath to enter the state of purity. The Qur'ān while mentioning the nature of sexual intimacy between husband and wife in this situation has explained the *sharī'ah* regarding this issue in the following words:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْمَحِيضِ قُلْ هُوَ أَذْيٌ فَاعْتَرُلُوا النِّسَاءَ فِي الْمَحِيضِ وَلَا تَغْرِبُوهُنَّ حَتَّىٰ يَطْهُرْنَ فَإِذَا
تَطْهُرْنَ فَأُثْوِنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمْرَكُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُطَهَّرِينَ (٢٢:٢)

They ask you concerning women's courses. Tell them: "They are an impurity. So keep away from women in their courses and do not approach them until they have cleansed themselves from blood. But when they have purified themselves after taking a bath, approach them in the manner the Almighty has directed you [in your instincts]. Indeed, Allah loves those who constantly repent and keep themselves clean." (2:222)

Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī, while explaining this verse writes:¹⁵

In this verse, two words have been used: طُهْر (*tuhr*) and تَطْهِير (*taṭāhhur*). While the former means "the completion of the state of impurity and discontinuation of menstrual bleeding", the latter implies "a woman entering

12. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi'* al-ṣahīḥ, 143, (no. 887).

13. Jawwād 'Alī, *Al-Mufassal fī tārīkh al-'arab qabl al-islām*, vol. 6, 346.

14. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 1, 11, (no. 45).

15. Amīn Aḥsan Islāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 526.

the state of purity after having the ceremonial bath.” According to the verse, a woman should be in a state of purity for sexual intercourse; simultaneously, it is delineated that when a woman enters the state of purity, the husband can go near her. It is evident from these words that the real reason that prohibits sexual intercourse is blood; so once this stops, the prohibition no longer remains. However, the proper conduct in this regard is that a husband should approach his wife for sexual relations once she has had the ceremonial bath.

12. Ceremonial bath after Janābah

The directive of the ceremonial bath after *janābah* has always remained a part of the religion of the prophets. The Almighty has stated this directive particularly before the prayer in the following words:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرُبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَارَى حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُو مَا تَفْعُلُونَ وَلَا جُنُبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ
حَتَّىٰ تَعْتَسِلُوا (٤٣:٤)

Believers! Approach not the place of the prayer when you are in a drunken state until you are able to understand what you say nor when you are in a state of sexual impurity (*janābah*) till you have taken a bath except if you only intend to just pass through the prayer place. (4:43)

In Sūrah Mā’idah, this directive is stated thus: إِنْ كُنْتُمْ حُبِيبًا فَاطَّهِرُو (٥:٦) (if you are in a state of *janābah*, have a bath, (5:6)). By *janābah* is meant the state of impurity that one enters after copulation or after ejaculation whether or not copulation has taken place. The ceremonial bath is necessary after this state in order to be purified. One should have this bath in a thorough and complete manner. As per the linguistic principles of Arabic, the Qur’ānic words اطَّهِرُوا (*iṭṭaharū*) and اغْتَسِلُوا (*igħtasilū*) testify to this. The way the Prophet (sws) set about following this directive, as mentioned in various Ahadīth, can be summarized as:

First the hands should be washed;
then the genital area should be thoroughly cleaned by the left hand;
then *wudū* should be done except that feet should be washed later at the end;
then while inserting the fingers in the hair, water should be soaked into it so that it reaches its roots;

then water should be poured all over the body.

In the end, the feet should be washed.

Following are the Ahadīth that have reached us in this regard from ‘Ā’ishah (rta) and Maymūnah (rta), the blessed mothers of the believers:

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ قَالَتْ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا اغْتَسَلَ مِنْ الْجَنَابَةِ يَدْأُبُ فِي غَسْلِ يَدِيهِ ثُمَّ يُفْرِغُ بِيَمِينِهِ عَلَى شَمَالِهِ فَيَغْسِلُ فَرْجَهُ ثُمَّ يَتَوَضَّأُ وُضُوئهُ لِلصَّلَاةِ ثُمَّ يَأْخُذُ الْمَاءَ فَيَدْخُلُ أَصَابِعَهُ فِي أَصُولِ الشَّعْرِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَأَى أَنَّ فَدْ اسْتُبَرَّ حَفَنَ عَلَى رَأْسِهِ ثَلَاثَ حَفَنَاتٍ ثُمَّ أَفَاضَ عَلَى سَافِرِ حَسَدِهِ

ثُمَّ غَسَلَ رِجْلَيْهِ.

‘Ā’ishah reports that when the Prophet would have the ceremonial bath after *janābah*, he would first wash both hands. Then he would clean his genital area by the left hand after pouring water on it by the right one. Then he would do *wudū* the same way as *wudū* is done for the prayer. He would then take some water and insert his fingers in his hair until when he would see that the water had reached the skin, he would pour three handfuls of water on his head. Then he would drench all his body with water and then wash both feet.¹⁶

عَنْ أَبْنَى عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ حَدَّثَنِي خَالِتِي مَيْمُونَةُ قَالَتْ أَدْنِيْتُ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ غُسْلَهُ مِنْ الْجَنَابَةِ فَغَسَلَ كَفَيْهِ مَرَّتَيْنِ أَوْ ثَلَاثَتَ ثُمَّ أَدْخَلَ يَدَهُ فِي الْإِنَاءِ ثُمَّ أَفْرَغَ بِهِ عَلَى فَرْجِهِ وَغَسَلَهُ بِشَمَالِهِ ثُمَّ ضَرَبَ بِشَمَالِهِ الْأَرْضَ فَذَلِكَهَا دَلْكًا شَدِيدًا ثُمَّ تَوَضَّأَ وُضُوءَهُ لِلصَّلَاةِ ثُمَّ أَفْرَغَ عَلَى رَأْسِهِ ثَلَاثَ حَفَنَاتٍ مِلْءَ كَفِهِ ثُمَّ غَسَلَ سَائِرَ جَسَدِهِ ثُمَّ نَحَّى عَنْ مَقَامِهِ ذَلِكَ فَغَسَلَ رِجْلَيْهِ ثُمَّ أَتَيْتُهُ بِالْمَنْدِيلِ فَرَدَّهُ.

Ibn ‘Abbās narrated: “My aunt Maymūnah [once] told me: ‘I placed some water [in a utensil] before the Prophet (sws) so that he could have the ceremonial bath of *janābah*. He first washed both his hands two or three times. Then he slid his hand in the utensil and poured some water over his private area and washed it with his left hand. He then thoroughly rubbed this hand on the ground and did *wudū* the way it is done before the prayer. He then took three handfuls of water and poured them on his head. Then he washed all his body. He then stepped aside and washed both his feet.’”¹⁷

13. Bathing a dead body

Bathing a dead body is also from among the *sunan* of the prophets.¹⁸ The directive stands fulfilled if water is poured all over the body. However, keeping in view the importance of purification and cleanliness in Islam, the spirit of the directive is that the body should be bathed with diligence and thoroughness.

The directives regarding bathing a dead body which the Prophet (sws) once

16. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 142, (no. 718).

17. Ibid., 143, (no. 722).

18. In normal circumstances, every dead person must be given a bath. However, in extraordinary circumstances in which bathing a dead body and wrapping it in a coffin cloth becomes a matter of great difficulty, then the body can be buried without bathing it and without putting it in a coffin cloth. It is narrated in Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-sahīh*, 215, (no. 1347) that the Prophet (sws) directed Muslims to bury the martyrs of the battle of Uhud in this manner. This incident has been narrated in other books of Ḥadīth also. Our jurists associate such a burial with martyrdom only. However, in the opinion of this writer, this is a general exception which is based on the principle of relief (*rukhsah*) that is always kept in consideration in the various directives of Islam.

gave are:

اغسلنَّهَا ثَلَاثًا أَوْ خَمْسًا أَوْ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ بِمَاءٍ وَسِدْرٍ وَاجْعَلْنَ فِي الْأَخْرَةِ كَافُورًا أَوْ شَيْئًا مِنْ كَافُورٍ

Bathe the [dead] body of this [girl] with water and berry leaves three times or five times – or even more if required and add camphor or [he said] some camphor to the water with which you bathe her.¹⁹

اغسلنَّهَا وِتْرًا وَكَانَ فِيهِ ثَلَاثًا أَوْ خَمْسًا أَوْ سَبَعًا وَبَدَّوْا بِمَيَامِنَهَا وَمَوَاضِعِ الْوُضُوءِ مِنْهَا

Bathe this girl odd number of times: three or five or seven times and begin with her right side and from the limbs by which *wudū* is done.²⁰

14. Enshrouding a dead body in coffin cloth

Enshrouding the dead body in coffin cloth after giving it a bath is also an Abrahamic Sunnah. Though one single piece of cloth can be used for this purpose, however, to show due respect to the dead body something more elaborate seems befitting. ‘Ā’ishah (rta) narrates that the Prophet (sws) was enwrapped in three *yamānī* sheets of cotton which did not include any shirt or turban (*‘amāmah*).²¹ Thus he is reported to have said:

إِذَا كَفَنَ أَحَدُكُمْ أَحَادِثُهُ فَلْيَحْسِنْ كَفَنَهُ.

Any one among you who enshrouds your dead brother in a coffin cloth should do it befittingly.²²

15. Burial

Another practice among the prophets of Allah is burying the dead in a grave – the final resting place.²³ No specific way has been fixed for this. A ditch can be made by digging the earth and then covering it or a cavity can be made adjacent to a dug out ditch or the dead body may be buried in a coffin casket. All these ways can be adopted. However, the Prophet (sws) did not approve of cementing a grave or building some structure over it.²⁴ It has been reported in some *Aḥādīth* that at the time of burial, the Prophet (sws) also sprinkled clay from the head side of the body three times.²⁵

19. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 201, (no. 1258).

20. Ibid., 201, (no. 1254).

21. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 202, (no. 1264); Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 379, (no. 2179).

22. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 380, (no. 2185).

23. This way is to be adopted in normal circumstances. So if a person dies on a ship and the shore is far off, the only option left is to cast the body in the surrounding water.

24. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 389-390, (no. 2245).

25. Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, vol. 2, 261, (no. 1565). Though this is a *mu‘an‘an* narrative of a *mudallis* narrator, yet in Ibn ‘Asākir’s *Tarikh Madīnah Dimashq*, it is specified that he

16. ‘Id al-Fitr, 17. ‘Id al-Adhā

Both these festivals were originated by the Prophet (sws) at the behest of the Almighty. Before the advent of Islam in Arabia, we find mention of ‘id festivals as يَوْمُ السَّبَابِسْ (yawm al-sabāsab) and as well as of some others among the Idolaters of Arabia. The *shari‘ah* of the Israelites had ‘id festivals as well but as is evident from the Old Testament and other scriptures, these festivals related more to commemorating certain days of their history. In the last *shari‘ah* also, the Almighty fixed the above mentioned two ‘id festivals for man and associated them with two great manifestations of piety and submission to the Almighty. The ‘id al-fitr is observed on the first of Shawwāl right after the end of the holy month of Ramaḍān in which the believers undergo a period of fasting. Similarly, the ‘id al-adha is celebrated on the 10th of *dhū al-hajj* to commemorate the sacrifice offered by Abraham (sws).

It is evident from certain Ahādīth that these festivals were initiated in Madīnah after migration. Anas (rta) reports:

قَدِمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ الْمَدِينَةَ وَلَهُمْ يَوْمَانِ يَلْعَبُونَ فِيهِمَا فَقَالَ مَا هَذَا النَّيْمَانُ قَالُوا كُنَّا نَلْعَبُ فِيهِمَا فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ قَدْ أَبْدَلَكُمْ بِهِمَا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمَا يَوْمَ الْفِطْرِ وَيَوْمَ النَّحْرِ.

When the Prophet arrived in Madīnah, he found people celebrating two specific days in which they used to entertain themselves by playing and merriment. He asked them about the nature of these festivities at which they replied that these days were occasions of fun and recreation of the days of *jāhiliyyah*. At this, the Prophet remarked that the Almighty has fixed two days [of festivity] instead of these for you which are better than these: ‘id al-fitr and ‘id al-adha.²⁶

The rituals which have been made Sunnah in these days and whose details have been mentioned in an earlier chapter “The *Shari‘ah* of Worship Rituals” are the following:

1. *sadaqah al-fitr* after ‘id al-fitr
2. The Prayer and the Sermon
3. Animal Sacrifice
4. *takbīrs* after every prayer in the Days of *tashrīq*

Both these festivals of ‘id al-fitr and ‘id al-adhā are occasions of showing

heard this narrative from his teacher. See: Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Asākir, *Tarikh Madīnah Dimashq*, 1st ed., vol. 65 (Beirut: Dār ihyā’ al-turāth al-‘arabī, 2001), 33.

26. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 4, 141-142, (no. 13210).

gratitude to the Creator, remembering Him and are a means of entertainment. ‘Ā’ishah (rta), the mother of the believers, narrates that when on an ‘īd day her father Abū Bakr (rta) stopped young girls from singing, the Prophet (sws) said:

يَا أَبَا بَكْرٍ إِنَّ لِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ عِيدًا وَهَذَا عِيدُنَا.

Abū Bakr! [Let them sing]; every nation has an ‘īd and [this day] is our ‘īd.²⁷

27. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 153, (no. 952).

Oaths and their Atonement

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكُنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا عَدَّتُمُ الْأَيْمَانَ فَكَفَارَتُهُ إِطْعَامُ عَشَرَةِ مَسَاكِينَ مِنْ أَوْسَطِ مَا تُطْعَمُونَ أَهْلِكُمْ أَوْ كَسْوَتِهِمْ أَوْ تَحْرِيرُ رَبَّةٍ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصَيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ ذَلِكَ كَفَارَةُ أَيْمَانِكُمْ إِذَا حَلَقْتُمْ وَاحْفَظُوا أَيْمَانَكُمْ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ شَكُورُونَ (٨٩ : ٥)

Allah will not hold you accountable for your inadvertent oaths, but He will definitely hold you accountable for oaths you swear with solemn intention. So if such an oath is broken, its atonement is the feeding of ten needy persons of a standard with which you normally feed your own families or the clothing of ten needy people or the liberation of one slave. But whosoever cannot afford these should fast for three days. This is the atonement for the oaths when you have sworn. And be true to that which you have sworn. Thus Allah explains to you His verses that you may be grateful. (5:89)

Pledging oaths carries a great significance in Islam. Keeping one's word is a fundamental part of Islamic ethics. Oaths emphasize an assertion to the ultimate extent. When a Muslim swears by the Almighty on an intention or a plan that he wishes to carry out, it is as if he has called the Creator of the heavens and the earth to be a witness over his word. In a society, oaths have always remained the real means of stability regarding various contracts as well as various social, political and cultural affairs. Owing to this very reason, the Israelites were reminded by the Almighty in the Qur'ān of the covenant they had made with Him through an oath they had pledged. They were warned that they must not break this oath – something over which they have made the Almighty as witness:

وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدْتُمْ وَلَا تَنْقُضُوا أَيْمَانَكُمْ كَفِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ (٩١ : ١٦)

Fulfil the covenant of Allah when you have entered into it, and break not your oaths after you have confirmed them: indeed you have made Allah your witness over yourselves. Indeed, Allah knows all that you do. (16:91)

In spite of this importance that oaths and covenants occupy, many a time it becomes impossible for a person to honour his word or he may feel that fulfilling a certain oath might be instrumental in infringing the rights of the Almighty or of his own self or even of others. In such cases, one can break one's oath. In fact, in some cases, breaking an oath becomes a moral necessity. In the Islamic *sharī'ah*, an atonement (*kaffārah*) has been prescribed for a broken oath.

Following is a summary of the Qur'ānic *sharī'ah* regarding oaths and their atonement which has been outlined in verse 5:89 quoted in the beginning:

1. At times, an oath is totally absurd, nonsensical and meaningless. No doubt, a believer should refrain from pledging such oaths; however, it is a great favour and blessing of the Almighty that He will not hold people accountable for the fulfilment of such oaths, neither in this world nor in the Hereafter.

2. On the other hand, if an oath is pledged with a solemn will and intention or if some contract has been made on its basis or it has an effect on the rights and obligations of the parties involved or it infringes upon the injunctions of the *sharī'ah*, the Almighty would definitely hold a person responsible for it. So a person must not be careless and indiscreet in this matter. On the contrary, he should act in a very responsible manner in this regard.

3. If, owing to some reason, a person is forced to break such an oath, then he must atone for it. For this, he is required to feed ten poor people with the standard of food he normally feeds his own family or to give them clothes to wear or to liberate a slave. If he is unable to do either of these, he must fast for three days.

The above discussion summarizes the Qur'ānic directives regarding oaths. While explaining these directives, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have stressed the following three things:

Firstly, *nadhr* (vow) is also a form of an oath. So it will also be atoned in a similar manner in case it is broken:

كَفَارَةُ النَّذْرِ كَفَارَةُ الْيَمِينِ

The atonement of a *nadhr* is the same as that of an oath.¹

Secondly, an oath should never impede good deeds:

وَإِذَا حَلَفْتَ عَلَى يَمِينٍ فَرَأَيْتَ غَيْرَهَا خَيْرًا مِنْهَا فَكَفَرْتُ عَنْ يَمِينِكَ وَأَتَ الذِّي هُوَ خَيْرٌ

If you pledge an oath for something and a better alternative comes your way, break the oath and atone for it and do what is better.²

Thirdly, swearing by any one other than the Almighty is an act of *shirk* (polytheism); so, one should swear by the Almighty only:

1. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 721, (no. 4253).

2. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-ṣahīḥ*, 1145, (no. 6622).

مَنْ حَلَفَ بِعَيْرِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ أَشْرَكَ

He who swore by any one other than Allah has committed an act of polytheism.³

3. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, vol. 3, 220, (no. 3251).

Epilogue

I am grateful to God that the work on this book which began in 1990 (1410 AH) has finally been completed today after seventeen years. This book explains the entire religion revealed to mankind through Muḥammad, the last Prophet of God. The content of religion has been presented here in its pristine form and has been cleansed from *fiqh* and *kalām*, philosophy and *taṣawwuf*. It is based purely on the Qur’ān and Sunnah. What is ascribed to the Prophet (sws) regarding religion is stated as supporting and subservient material only. In this regard, only those narratives have been accepted which conform to the standards set by the scholars of Ḥadīth. Any narrative which does not conform to these standards has not been included in this book.

In the interpretation of the Qur’ān and Sunnah found in this book, I have delved deep into all the views of earlier and later scholars of this *ummah* which have been handed down to us. Whatever I accepted from them never owed to the number of scholars who were its proponents or to some famous authority; it entirely owed to the arguments proffered for it. The views of Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī and those of my mentor Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī are the foundation of this book; however, what has been presented on the basis of their views has never been presented because it is merely attributed to these outstanding scholars. At times, I reflected for many months, and only what I found convincing on the basis of arguments was accepted. What could not convince me in this regard did not find its way in this book. Consequently, just as I have differed with other scholars and researchers at many places, I have similarly differed with these revered personalities as well.

However, this book is the work of a human being. I have kept on reviewing it and making changes and additions in it. Anyone who has seen its various chapters that have been published as booklets in various periods of time can see that whenever I have realized any error in language and presentation, knowledge and data, deduction and inference I have corrected it in the next edition without any hesitation whatsoever. I am always prepared to rectify any mistake that in future becomes evident to me or is made evident to me. I seek refuge with God from deliberately making a mistake or from deliberately remaining adamant on it in matters of religion.

While expressing and acknowledge the blessings of God in this regard, I would also at this instance like to thank Sheikh Afzaal Ahmēd, who is like a brother to me. In all these years, he relieved me of earning my livelihood and provided for all my needs with great affection and generosity. No different is the case of my wife. Had it not been for her sacrifice and co-operation, it would not have been easy for me to concentrate and devote myself to this work in the humdrum of

domestic worries. I am also very grateful to the brotherly care and affection of Shakeel ur Rahman, Dr Munir Ahmad, Muhammad Anees Mufti and Altaf Mahmood. They looked after my personal affairs in every sense of the word. In the last two years, Shahid Moulood and Imran Karim have also become a part of this team in the same capacity.

I am similarly also grateful to my students and friends whose suggestions and criticisms helped me in rectifying the shortcomings of this book. Among them, Muhammad Ammar Khan Nasir, Moiz Amjad and Talib Mohsin are worthy of special mention. This service has also been rendered by Muhammad Rafi Mufti and Iftikhar Tabassum. Both of them have critically analyzed all the narratives cited in this book, and have given very useful suggestions for their acceptance or rejection. I have accepted most of these suggestions. My gratitude also to Shehzad Saleem who has completed the English translation of this book as soon as it was completed. Manzoor ul Hassan and his assistants – all belonging to the Research and Academics department of Al-Mawrid – have greatly helped in the publishing of this book. I am indebted to them as well. The hard work and responsibility with which they have embarked upon this task is very commendable in every sense of the word.

This book is the result of a student's research, and is being presented in this very capacity. I pray to the Almighty that if this endeavour has been of any service to His religion, then it be accepted by Him and be made a means of my forgiveness. This is the only desire left in me. All other desires have left my heart. If at all, I only await God's recognition.

Javed Ahmad Ghāmidī
Friday, 27th April 2007 AD
9th Rabī‘ al-Thānī 1428 AH

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